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**Family talk: Irish women
across generations negotiate
single motherhood**

Submitted for the award of:

Doctor of Philosophy

Subject:

Psychology

With:

The Open University

30 June 2017

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Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge a huge debt of gratitude to my two PhD supervisors:

Dr Rose Capdevila and Dr Jean McAvoy. You encouraged and supported me over a long number of years with patience and kindness. You also provided excellent academic direction. I could not have completed this thesis without you. Thank you.

I would also like to acknowledge Professor Margaret Wetherell. Your work is an inspiration. Thank you for accepting me as your student. It was a pleasure to work with you, however briefly, before your retirement.

To Karen Hagan, who encouraged me to do a PhD and accessed funding for me to do it. You have made me feel cared for throughout my time working for the Open University. Thank you.

Dedication

To the people I love the most:

My son Danny Scott

My daughter Niamh Marie Scott

And my grandson Theo Joseph McCloskey

To my wonderful extended family of O'Rourkes who have loved and encouraged me and celebrated my every success, no matter how small.

My five aunts and five uncles:

Mary Ellen Whyte, Michael Denis O'Rourke, Elizabeth Patricia O'Rourke, Timothy Owen O'Rourke, Ellen Veronica Carmody, Margaret Angela O'Rourke, Denis Patrick O'Rourke, Christina Rose Fitzsimons, Martin O'Rourke, Patrick Noel O'Rourke.

And my numerous O'Rourke cousins.

You are living proof that one is never alone in an Irish Catholic family!

For my Dad: John Joseph O'Rourke –

It turns out that 'dialectical materialism [really] is a load of claptrap Daddy!' I wish you were alive so that I could tell you.

Abstract

Until relatively recently, single motherhood in Ireland, could result in stigmatisation, social exclusion and institutionalisation. This thesis examines the ways in which three generations of women in Irish families talked about single motherhood. Interviews were conducted with seven intergenerational families of women in family groups. Follow up interviews were carried out with each woman individually after the family interviews. At least one of the women in each family of three generations had, at some point in her life, been pregnant and unmarried under the age of 20 and had kept the child. The research was informed by social constructionism and critical discursive psychological methodologies. Despite protestations of change and openness to sexual freedoms in Irish society, the research identified discourses of progress and social change alongside discourses of chastity and sexual morality. Drawing on these discourses, single mothers and their families used complex strategies to construct respectability. Good mothering identities were taken up alongside neoliberal concerns and sexual stigmatisation was avoided by taking up positions of naiveté and sexual innocence. Moreover, family identities were constructed collaboratively in the narratives of the women. These narratives reinforced gender roles, constructed family support during pregnancy and following the birth of a child, but also attributed blame and applied sanctions to single mothers. Fathers of single mothers were argued to be disappointed by their daughters' unsanctioned pregnancies, whilst fathers of children were argued as necessary, if sometimes unwilling, participants in the lives of children. The thesis contributes an understanding of how Irish women live and how they understand and are allowed to understand themselves as well as the ways in which family respectability is negotiated collaboratively. It also adds to our understanding of the ways in which family identities can be maintained and sustained in family interaction in the context of identity trouble.

Chapter 1. Introduction: Single Motherhood in Ireland

This thesis is about single motherhood in Ireland. It is also about the ways in which Irish women talk about single motherhood in families, specifically in families where one or more of the women has, at some point in her life, been pregnant, unmarried and under the age of 20 and kept the child. The topic of single motherhood is one that has been of significance in Irish public discourse in various ways throughout my own life and the lives of the women who participated in this research.

The occasion in 2016 of the commemorations of 100 years since the 1916 rising, which began Ireland's route to becoming independent from the British Empire, inspired a variety of projects, which often involved reflection on the period since independence. One such project was the quest, by the National broadcaster, RTE, and An Post (the postal service), to find Ireland's ten favourite poems from the last 100 years. Among the shortlisted poems was one that was written by Paula Meehan. The poem concerns the story of a fifteen-year-old girl, Ann Lovett, who died alone, having given birth to a child who also died, beside a grotto in the village of Granard, Co. Longford, in 1984.

According to Maguire (2001), it took two weeks for the story of Ann Lovett to be reported in the national newspapers in Ireland. It was a story, she claims, that was given only a brief account in the local paper in County Longford, where Ann was born and where she died. Maguire argues that Ann's death opened up a space for discussion of the treatment of single motherhood: a topic, she argues, that had not been addressed in this way in public

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discourse, previously. Maguire (2001) claims that news of Ann's death resulted in an 'outpouring' of grief, which found its initial focus in letters that were sent to, arguably, the most popular radio show in the country, The Gay Byrne Show.

Many of the letters were read out on the radio show and related what Maguire describes as 'previously untold' stories of Irish women who had become pregnant as teenagers. In addition there were accounts from others who wrote to defend their support for an amendment to the Irish Constitution that banned abortion in all cases; except where there was an immediate threat to the life of the pregnant woman and which gave equal rights to 'unborn children' and 'mothers'. This amendment was approved on 7 September 1983, shortly before the death of Ann Lovett and it remains in force today.

The popularity of the poem, which is reproduced in Appendix A, is an indication of the complex and often troubled ways in which topics such as sexual morality, worship, and public sites of worship are constructed in Ireland. It also reflects a period in relatively recent Irish history that makes for an uncomfortable assessment of how women and young girls, regarded as sexual transgressors, were treated.

It is this history which forms the backdrop for this thesis. The research investigates the talk of women across three generations of Irish families. I interviewed each of the seven families who took part in the research as a family group. The interviews were in two parts, with a break in the middle. I then interviewed each woman separately after the family interviews. In order to participate in the research, any one of the women in each family had to have, at some point in her life, been pregnant, unmarried, under the age of 20, and have gone on to keep the child. The reasons for this particular combination of participants

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will be discussed in detail, in chapters 3 and 4, but, in brief, the participant profile was based on a number of factors. Firstly, single motherhood has historically impacted on all women in a family (Earner-Byrne, 2008), so it was important to interview families of women together. Secondly, single motherhood has a history of changing stigmatisation, which means that the topic has been constructed differently at different times in the lives of the women who took part in the study. This meant that an intergenerational design provided useful insights into how talk about single motherhood is managed across generations. Thirdly, stigma relating to single motherhood has diminished in Ireland but is still evident in relation to teenage motherhood (Hyde, 2000). For this reason, I wanted to include women who had been teenage mothers, rather than single mothers, more generally. The reason that only one woman in the family needed to have been a young single mother for inclusion in the research, is that births to women under twenty are recorded in very low numbers. They reached 6.2% of all births in 1999 and are currently at 1.9%, since 2015 (C.S.O., 2017). Single motherhood has been of substantial public interest in Ireland in recent decades and has been the subject of much public debate and commentary.

1.1 Single motherhood in context

As I edit this chapter, in June 2017, there is a story in the online newspaper, the Journal.ie, about women who are protesting outside the Irish parliament (The Journal.ie, 2017). The headline reads - *You weren't allowed touch your own baby - your own flesh and blood'* - and the by-line says - 'Survivors of the Magdalene Laundries gathered outside the Dáil yesterday calling for a truth commission into ALL homes around the country'.

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The story concerns a group of women who allege that the government has failed to investigate fully the links between three kinds of Catholic-Church-run institution. They further allege that there has been a failure to fully investigate the role that the state played in funding the institutions and facilitating the transfer of people between them. The three institutions in question are, Industrial Reformatory Schools, Magdalene¹ laundries, and Mother and Baby homes. The Industrial Reformatory school network existed prior to the formation of the state. However, an investigation that began in 2000, and which was published in 2009, found that at varying times in different institutions from 1945 to the mid-1990s, children had been subjected to physical, emotional, and sexual abuse in these institutions and that the abusers (members of religious orders) were protected from punishment by the Church (Ryan, 2009). The Industrial Reformatory schools are relevant to the Magdalene laundries because one of the routes of entry to Magdalene Laundries was by transfer from Industrial Reformatory Schools (McAleese, 2013).

The Magdalene Laundries included a number of institutions that housed women who were regarded as 'fallen women'; women who were unmarried and potentially sexually active, those who were thought to be vulnerable to sexual exploitation, and those who became pregnant whilst unmarried (Smith, 2004). Catholic homes were managed by varying orders of nuns and evangelical Protestants ran the Bethany home (a similar kind of institution).

¹ The Magdalene homes were named after the biblical Mary Magdalene who was also known as Mary of Magdela. She was portrayed as a reformed prostitute, though the Catholic Church revised this version in 1969. The institutions are sometimes referred to with the spelling Magdalen and this is the preferred spelling for historians. It is also the spelling that was used in the official report into the homes. For the purpose of this thesis, I will use Magdalene, because this is the spelling that is used by advocacy groups.

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Inglis (1988) argues that the purpose of such homes was the 'reform' or at least containment of 'fallen' women. The last of the Magdalene Laundries closed in 1996.

In 2010, an advocacy group, called *Justice for Magdalenes*, submitted a report (J.F.M., 2010) to the Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC). In it, they claimed that, between 1922 and 1996, when the last of the laundries closed, 30 000 women were detained in ten laundries across Ireland and were forced to work there, sometimes on state contracts. The submission contained accounts from women about their admission and incarceration in Magdalene Laundries. The following is an extract of witness testimony from the report about the admission procedures:

When I got there they... (Religious staff)... took all your clothes off ... (crying).... Cut all your hair off and bandaged you ... (breasts)... up so that you wouldn't look like a girl, because your body was sin and belonged to the devil.

On the day of admission ... the nun said to me "from today on your name is ...X... (not own name)... don't tell anyone where you came from or who you are". (JFM, 2010, p. 19).

I will return to this extract further in chapter 2, when I discuss the construction of identities.

In response to the JFM submission, the Irish Human Rights Commission (I.H.R.C.) concluded that there was evidence that the state had failed to protect women and young girls from 'arbitrary detention', 'forced and compulsory labour', and 'servitude'. They recommended a government inquiry be set up (I.H.R.C., 2010). The subsequent investigation (McAleese, 2013) examined some aspects of the allegations made by *Justice for Magdalenes* and concluded that the government should pay compensation to the women (McAleese, 2013).

On 19 February 2013, An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny (the Irish Prime Minister), offered a public

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apology in the Irish Parliament (*Oireachtasdebates, 2013*). Part of this apology will be reproduced and discussed in chapter 3.

The third kind of institution that the news article at the start of the chapter refers to is a network of mother and baby homes. Mother and baby homes were institutions in which unmarried pregnant women were housed. Here, they gave birth to children, many of whom were given up for adoption. These institutions, the last of which closed in 1996 (Smith, 2004), are the subject of a further current investigation. This investigation follows an analysis of recorded deaths in one of the homes at Tuam, Co. Galway, by a local historian, Catherine Corless (2014). She found that 768 children were recorded as having died at the home between 1925 and 1961, a figure far in excess of infant mortality rates of the time. It had been alleged that many of these infants were buried in the grounds of the mother and baby home, in a disused septic tank. In 2016, a commission of investigation was set up to investigate these claims and in 2017, it published an interim report (Commission of Investigation, 2017). The investigation found that a number (yet to be confirmed) of bodies of infants were interred in the grounds of the mother and baby home. The investigation has more work to do. It remains to be seen whether or not the campaign by the women in the article mentioned above will be successful, and whether a wider investigation, linking all mother and baby homes, Magdalene Laundries, and Industrial Reformatory Schools, will be commissioned.

Wilmer and Žukauskaitė (2015) argue that the revelations about the mother and baby home in Tuam emerged from a historical situation, in which the ‘ideology of the state and the notion of a sacrosanct national identity’ (p. 254) fostered many unethical practices by religious institutions that were neither acknowledged nor challenged. They go on to argue

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that a multitude of representations in film and television, as well as media stories relating to Magdalene laundries and other institutions, have mobilised public opinion in condemnation of the dehumanisation of women. However, whether or not Wilmer and Žukauskaitė's (2015) claim that there is a complete change in opinion relating to the condemnation and dehumanisation of women, is a matter for some debate. Nevertheless, there is certainly a great deal of public interest in Ireland in the kind of fictional and biographical representations that Wilmer and Žukauskaitė discuss. For example, film adaptations of *The Secret Scripture*, by Sebastian Barry in 2016, and *Philomena*, by Martin Sixsmith in 2015, were both met with critical acclaim and a great deal of public interest.

1.2 Irish identities and change

The incarceration of women in Magdalene Laundries and their being housed in a network of Mother and Baby homes arose from a specific set of historical circumstances. Ferriter (2009) argues that following the declaration of the Irish Republic in 1937, there was a deliberate and self-conscious attempt to construct a particular kind of identity for Irish people. The following is an excerpt from a speech from the leader of the country, An Taoiseach, Eamonn DeValera, on St Patrick's Day, in 1943.

The ideal Ireland that we would have, the Ireland that we dreamed of, would be the home of a people who valued material wealth only as a basis for right living, of a people who, satisfied with frugal comfort, devoted their leisure to the things of the spirit – a land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose fields and villages would be joyous with the sounds of industry, with the romping of sturdy children, the contest of athletic youths and the laughter of happy maidens, whose firesides would be forums

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for the wisdom of serene old age. The home, in short, of a people living the life that God desires that men should live (Transcript from RTE archives).

This much quoted, and misquoted, speech encapsulates a variety of facets of how identities of Irish people were envisioned. The people of the land are constructed as living simple lives in rural settings; a spiritual unmaterialistic people, with ‘happy maidens’ living to serene old age. It is these ‘happy maidens’ that are of interest in this thesis.

Since Eamonn DeValera made the speech quoted above, there has been substantial change in Ireland. The Celtic Tiger years of the 1990s gave rise to some prosperity and at the same time the influence of the Catholic Church had begun to wane (Ferriter, 2009; Inglis, 2002). Smith (2007) argues that a history of sexual repression and cruelty to women is commonly positioned as part of a dark past, which reflects moral standards that no longer apply in contemporary Ireland. These moral standards are consigned to an ‘old Ireland’; an Ireland which was influenced by the moral standards of the Catholic Church and one which has little relevance to the more enlightened socially progressive Ireland that exists today.

There has certainly been a change in approach to the kinds of sexual behaviour that are socially sanctioned in Ireland. In May 2015, Ireland legalised same sex marriage by popular vote. This development was hailed in many newspapers as indicative of a ‘new Ireland’. As well known Irish Times columnist, Fintan O’Toole, put it:

It looks like a victory for tolerance. But it’s actually an end to mere toleration. Tolerance is what “we” extend, in our gracious goodness, to “them”. It’s about saying “You do your own thing over there and we won’t bother you so long as you don’t bother us”. The resounding Yes is a statement that Ireland has left tolerance far behind. It’s saying that there’s no “them” anymore. LGBT people are us — our sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, brothers

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and sisters, neighbours and friends. We were given the chance to say that. We were asked to replace tolerance with the equality of citizenship. And we took it in both arms and hugged it close [...] It's the end of that whole, sterile, useless, unproductive division. There is no longer a Liberal Ireland and a Conservative Ireland. The cleavage between rural and urban, tradition and modernity that has shaped so many of the debates of the last four decades has been repaired. This is a truly national moment — as joyful in Bundoran as it is Ballymun, in Castlerea as it is in Cobh. Instead of Liberal Ireland and Conservative Ireland we have a decent, democratic Ireland. (O'Toole, 2015)

Fintan O'Toole's representation of Ireland as having changed entirely and the popularity of Paula Meehan's stark reflection on the consequences of previous sexual regimens in her poem about the story of Ann Lovett, offer powerful examples of current discourses about public attitudes to sexual behaviour. As I will discuss in chapters 3 and 4, there is no doubt that substantial social and economic changes have occurred in Ireland across the lifetimes of the three generations of women who took part in the study.

The changes include the development of rural electrification, which accelerated in the 1960s and 1970s; and the introduction of free secondary level education for all in 1966 within the lifetime of the grandmother generations. They include Ireland's entry into the European Economic Community in 1973 and the resulting social and economic changes that resulted.

The mass emigration from Ireland during the 1980s due to a lack of economic opportunities, is in the living memory of the daughter generation. Women of this generation had much greater access to work than their mothers, particularly following the

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removal of the ban on married women working outside the home in 1973. In addition, this generation saw the introduction of over the counter contraception from 1992 and the introduction of divorce in 1995 (Kennedy, 2001).

The youngest generation of women were born during the boom years of the so called 'Celtic Tiger', of the 1990s. They saw increased economic prosperity, as well as changing populations from outside of Ireland. Kirby, et al. (2002) claim that Ireland reinvented itself during this period, and that at this time a new model of social and economic governance emerged. Inglis (2014) argues that the Celtic tiger years of the 1990s brought prosperity to Ireland which, despite an economic decline starting in 2008, forever changed the ways in which people live. Inglis claims that Ireland has changed, from becoming an almost entirely homogenous and primarily Roman Catholic society, to one that is now multicultural, bringing a new and vibrant cultural identity. He goes on to argue that, in contemporary Ireland, family and community have replaced religious values as sources of identity.

There have also been changes to the ways in which sexuality is regarded. In addition to the legalisation of same sex marriage by popular vote in 2015, on 13 June 2017, Leo Varadkar, an openly gay politician, was elected as Taoiseach. In addition there has been a substantial change in the numbers of women having children outside of marriage. In 1980, this figure was 5%. By 2015, the number had reached 36.45 (C.S.O., 2016). This would seem to suggest that Old Ireland is gone and that the New Ireland, so to speak, is different.

This thesis will trouble this conceptualisation of complete change in the identities of Irish people. Yes, there has been a change in the ways in which identities of Irishness have been constructed, with a related change in the ways in which Irish people take up identities.

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However, for the women in this study, the older discourses of Christian morality mingle with newer discourses of economic citizenship. These in turn are troubled by mothering identities old and new. In addition, families and family interactions serve to construct, correct, maintain, and sustain narratives about identities of families and family members. As well as this, the discourses of progress and change that have been discussed so far in this chapter must also be negotiated. In this thesis, I will argue that Irish people have not 'broken free' of the constraints of former types of subjectification, to use Foucault's (Foucault, 1982) terminology. The processes of objectification, dividing practices, and self-surveillance still continue to construct subjectivities. However, they do so in ways that integrate old and new forms of discursive resource, in complex and interesting ways.

One potential source of identities that is not explicitly addressed in this thesis is that of social class. Class identities are only considered in this study in relation to the ways in which certain kinds of people are devalued in talk because they are considered to be poor and undeserving or burdensome. The reason this topic has not been explicitly addressed is that the Irish class system does not map neatly on to class divisions that are identified in United Kingdom or North American contexts. So if I had used these terms I might have constructed a picture of my research participants and what they had to say that did not reflect the social context in which the research took place. This has much to do with the social and economic history of Ireland. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, following independence social structures were largely organised to support the needs and interests of an ascendant farming class (Kennedy, 2001). As Table 2 in that chapter shows, industrialisation has been far less significant in Irish society than other forms of labour such as agriculture, and therefore simple use of class descriptors might indicate a narrative of

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class that does not fit with the particular context of this research. Furthermore, none of the participants located themselves within any particular social class, so I did not attempt to identify a social class on their behalf.

1.3 Researching single motherhood: discourse and psychology

This thesis takes the perspective of social constructionism (Gergen, 1999; Berger and Luckmann, 1991). It assumes that individuals are born into a cultural context that has an array of culturally available sets of meanings and ways of being a person. As I will argue in chapter 2, this approach follows the work of Michel Foucault (2006, 2002, 1988, 1986, and 1977), which argues that subjectivities are constructed in discourse.

In examining the topic of single motherhood across generations, I will use methodological approaches that emerged following a 'turn to language' in social sciences in the 1980s and the development of discursive psychology (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Billig, 1987; Billig, 1988). Discursive researchers in psychology argue that, rather than focusing on internal states, which cannot be observed, the focus of investigation in psychology should be on the ways in which meanings are negotiated in talk and interaction. It is by analysis of talk and interaction, and the ways in which it is managed, that an understanding of the complexity of human meaning making can be accessed.

In particular, the analysis will be informed by the 'synthetic approach' (Wetherell, 1998) of critical discursive psychology, which takes a 'top down' and 'bottom up' approach to the analysis of talk. The top down approach examines prevailing discourses within a particular context, while bottom up analyses examine the ways in which these are lived out in the patterned and ordered ways by which people interact. Critical discursive psychology also

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examines the contradictions that arise from the multitude of competing discourses that are drawn upon in talk (Billig, 1988). It further argues that meanings are 'situated' (Haraway, 1988) in specific contexts of time and place. In examining the topic of single motherhood in Ireland, the situated nature of the positioning of single mothers is clearly apparent. Single mothers have been and, I will argue, continue to be problematized in a variety of ways. This will be explored further in Chapter 3. The aim of this thesis then, is not to ask, 'why are single mothers a problem?' or 'how can we solve the problem of single motherhood?'; rather, the research examines how single motherhood is presented as a problem and how women, impacted by problematizing discourses, negotiate identities. Wetherell (2005) argues that 'trouble' arises in the negotiation of identities that do not live up to social ideals and expectations. It is this trouble that is of interest in this thesis.

1.4 The research questions

The questions explored were as follows:

- What discourses did the women draw upon when talking about single motherhood?
- How were discourses mobilised and resisted?
- How were versions of family worked up in the interviews?
- How did the families collaborate in working up versions of events and themselves?
- What dilemmas and contradictions arose in the talk of the women?

1.5 Overview of thesis

Chapter 2, *Constructing knowledge: Investigating Psychologies*, sets out the theoretical basis for the thesis and justifies social constructionism as a framework for understanding single motherhood. It argues that the process of identification of variables for measurement, in order to establish cause and effect, central to a positivist, realist paradigm is flawed because the variables themselves are a social construction. I argue that the most relevant approach to understanding single motherhood in Irish families is one that is grounded in social constructionism. The work of Michel Foucault, and later developments of his theory, provides a basis for understanding the ways in which subjectivities are produced in discourse. The chapter then goes on to discuss the contribution of discursive psychology as a set of methodological approaches for investigating the discursive production of subjectivities. Some of the debates that have arisen within discursive psychology are discussed and I argue that Wetherell's (2005) synthetic approach is the most useful for informing the research.

Chapter 3: *The Making of Happy Maidens*, examines some of the ways in which motherhood, female sexuality, single motherhood, and young single motherhood have been constructed. The background and history of single motherhood in Ireland - and the specific ways in which single mothers and those thought to be sexually active were silenced, incarcerated, and made invisible - will be discussed. It will be argued that 'exemplars' (Inglis, 2002) of problematized women are used as a means of managing women's sexual behaviour, more generally. The chapter will also discuss the construction of maternal identities, as self-sacrificing, caring, and critical to the wellbeing of children. It will go on to examine the ways in which sexuality has been regulated, in particular for women, and

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discuss some of the changes that have occurred for women since the formation of the state. I will argue that there now appears to be some scope for women as sexually independent beings, but that those who are categorised as promiscuous are frequently constructed as not meeting acceptable social norms. A woman's sexuality, once married or partnered, it is argued, is positioned in relation to her role as a heterosexual partner to a man. The chapter concludes that the stigmatisation of out of wedlock parenting has been largely replaced by the stigmatisation of young mothers (often identified as teenagers), who are, or are believed to be, welfare dependent and without a partner.

Chapter 4, *Family Matters*, reviews literature in relation to constructions of family, and assumptions about what makes a family. It argues that the concept of the family, and what constitutes an acceptable family form, is related to the economic activities of family members. The specific ways in which Irish families have been constructed in the recent past, and some recent demographic changes, are presented. Some models of the ways in which family interactions are mutually constructed by family members are discussed; work that examines the importance of narrative and storytelling in family interaction is also reviewed. The chapter goes on to examine some of the ways in which family roles are gendered and the ways in which family relationships have been theorised. The topic of single fathers is discussed; it is argued that unmarried fathers are frequently invisible in academic literature and in public discourse.

Chapter 5, *Collecting Talk*, gives an account and justification of the methods that were used to obtain and analyse data. The design of recruitment materials that did not position single mothers as problematic but, at the same time, were explicit enough for participants to

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identify themselves, is discussed. Ethical procedures are described for both the recruitment and the conduct of the interviews. I argue that interviewing was the most useful way of collecting data for the research and discuss the interviewing method (Wengraf, 2001) that was adapted for data collection. The chapter includes a profile of the participants in the research and my own profile and perspective, as a researcher. Details of the method of transcription are provided and I go on to describe the process of data analysis. The chapter ends with an overview of some of the analytic concepts that informed the analysis.

Chapter 6, *Discourses of Single Motherhood*, is the first of three empirical chapters. This chapter examines some of the versions of single motherhood that the women use in their talk. It argues that women draw on common discourses relating to motherhood, single motherhood, participation in the world of work, and sexual stigmatisation. Three discourses that are utilised by the women when talking about single motherhood are discussed - *the sexually stigmatised woman*, *the neoliberal failure*, and *the good mother like any other*. The analysis will demonstrate that these discourses are not challenged in themselves; rather, the women mobilise these resources in ways that allow them to negotiate the trouble that arises in the context of single motherhood. They resist being positioned within some of the discourses whilst at the same time positioning imagined others within them. It is argued that, due to the troubled nature of single mother identities, the women work up versions of themselves as respectable and as not fitting the negative connotations attached to the single mother discourses identified in the talk. In order to do this, they apply negative discourses to imagined 'exemplars'. In addition, it is argued that

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they take up the discourse of 'good mother like any other' as an acceptable position, which constructs respectable identities.

Chapter 7, *Family Roles and Relationships*, presents empirical findings, which demonstrate the ways in which the women construct versions of family relationships in the context of single motherhood. The chapter presents data that show that single motherhood is not just a site of trouble for the woman herself but also for her family. Talk about protecting the family reputation from the imagined gaze of others, and of keeping family secrets, is presented. Narratives in which out of wedlock pregnancy was hidden from the gaze of others are discussed, along with discourses that relate the pregnancy of a young woman to poor parenting by her own parents. The ways in which the roles of men, as fathers of single mothers, and as fathers of the children of single mothers, and how they appear in the talk, is also discussed. The fathers of the women are constructed as being disappointed by their daughters' unexpected pregnancies; sometimes as authority figures and sometimes as supportive of their daughters' emotional needs. Fathers of children are constructed as important and relevant to the ongoing wellbeing of children, in particular sons, but do not appear to be constructed as essential to the women themselves.

Chapter 8, *Managing Talk in Families*, presents some of the discursive strategies that were used when the women collaborated together in talk. The first section presents talk *about* talk and demonstrates ways in which delicate subjects are managed when there is an expectation that strong emotions will result. Pregnancies are identified as either sanctioned or unsanctioned and the differences in the ways in which this kind of news is related are discussed. The use of silences and omissions is argued to be an essential facet

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of communicating information that may not be welcomed by the hearer. The chapter goes on to examine ways in which emotions relating to discomfort and suffering are narrated in relation to unsanctioned pregnancies. The final section of this chapter looks at some of the ways in which families collaborate to narrate versions of themselves as families. It argues that particular kinds of narrative (Taylor & Littleton, 2006) communicate morals and values that are part of family identities. Families in this context negotiate stories about themselves and talk of the ways in which identities are maintained, corrected, and reinforced in talk.

Chapter 9, *Concluding the Thesis*, identifies the contribution of the research to new knowledge and understanding. I return to the research questions and argue that the research is enormously consequential for understanding the ways in which women live their lives in the early part of the 21 century. The contribution to theorisation of discursive projection, onto imagined exemplars, as a way of avoiding particular discourses, is discussed. This adds to existing theorisation on discursive projection (McAvoy, 2009), by identifying discursive projection as an accomplishment of discursive delicacy that is dependent on contextual knowledge available to speakers. I argue that, despite protestations of change in Irish social values, single motherhood remains troubled and that this trouble is managed collectively within family groups.

The adaptation of Wengraf's (2001) method of interviewing for critical discursive psychology is identified as a potential tool for future researchers. The chapter also highlights the contribution of the research interviews as a resource for future research and argues that further analysis could provide a basis for additional theorisation of affect in talk

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(McAvoy, 2015; Wetherell, 2012). I then go on to reflect on my own role in the construction of the knowledge in this thesis and consider my relation to the topic, my choice of research methods, and the procedures that I used for collecting and analysing the data.

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In examining single motherhood across generations, my focus has been on the ways in which meanings are constructed in the cultural and historical context within which the research is situated. In this pursuit, I am taking an explicitly social constructionist approach that argues that individuals are fundamentally enmeshed within social, cultural, and historical processes. This is a particularly useful approach for studying single motherhood, since the meanings attributed to single motherhood have changed over time. It has meant (and means) different things in different contexts. This change in meaning, as I will argue in chapter 3, has been quite substantial in Ireland. I will argue that identities are constructed from the discursive resources that are available to the women and that, therefore, this approach is the most relevant and useful for the topic under investigation.

I will begin the chapter with a discussion of the development of the concept of ‘moral panic’ (Young, 2009) and note its application to teenage mothers (Kerry, 2007). I will then go on to show how this moral panic has been taken up in psychology text books that have been produced for undergraduate students. The chapter will go on to discuss the theoretical basis of the thesis. Foucault’s work (Foucault, 1986; Foucault, 1982; Foucault, 1977), I will argue, provides a plausible and useful basis for the ontological position of this thesis, that subjects are constructed in discourse.

The chapter will then go on to discuss my choice of discursive psychology as the epistemological approach to analysing data. I will briefly review debates between two strands of discursive psychology: conversation analytically oriented approaches and

discursive psychology (Schegloff, 1997; Billig, 1999a; Billig, 1999b; Schegloff, 1999a; Schegloff, 1999b), and will argue in favour of an approach informed by the synthetic approach proposed by Wetherell (1998). The various threads of discursive psychology that inform the analysis in this thesis will also be discussed. In addition, because the negotiation of troubled identities is one that is infused with emotional content, I will discuss the ways in which critical psychological discourse analysis theorises emotions and talk of emotion.

2.1 Variable variables and changing psychologies

The approach I took in this thesis builds on a critique of the adaptation of natural science methods to understanding the social world. Questions about the usefulness of positivist inspired methods emerged, following what some have described as a 'crisis in social psychology' in the 1960's (Parker, 1998). Inadequacies in relation to the use of methods, which isolate cause and effect, have been criticised in a number of ways (Smith, 1998, offers a clear review of this approach).

One important aspect of the critique is the claim that the isolation of variables for observation and measurement is not a neutral activity. Rather, variables can frequently be seen as constructions that are brought into being for the purpose of a study, rather than objects that exist in a neutral fashion. I am going to argue that the presentation of variables, as neutral and naturally occurring, has resulted in the reinforcement of social and cultural assumptions, in relation to young single motherhood.

In order to demonstrate the ways in which single motherhood has been constructed in some academic literature, it will be useful to examine the concept of 'moral panic'. Young

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(2009) claims that the concept of moral panic was first developed in the 1960s, to make sense of responses to changes in the structures and values of society. Moral panic was the term used to describe the ways in which particular groups of people are constructed as deviant and potentially a threat to social order; young men regarded as delinquents, for example, as well as hippies, marijuana users, those who demonstrate against wars etc. In recent decades, Kerry (2007) argues there has been moral panic about the assumed social problem of teenage mothers, which constructs them as numerous, neglectful, and a drain on the public purse. The 'panic' comes from the construction of such people as potentially damaging to society. As I will argue in chapter 3, Carabine (2001) has demonstrated that single mothers have been constructed as a threat to social order. Furthermore, young single mothers have been identified as being constructed as particularly problematic (see Phoenix, 1991, for an important analysis of the social construction of teenage motherhood). Duncan (2007) has argued, following a review of the literature, which I will discuss in more detail in chapter 3, that the age at which a mother has a child has little effect on social outcomes, that teenage mothers maintain close bonds with their children, and that often their motherhood is the impetus for engagement with education and work. For the purpose of this thesis, I carried out an assessment of developmental psychology books to see how single motherhood is constructed in academic text books. In 2010, when I began my PhD research, I examined the shelf in the library of the institution, where I work, that was marked 'developmental psychology'. The section contained 9 books, which are listed in Appendix B. Of the nine books, one was from 1990, one was from 1995, one was from 1996; there was one each from 2002, 2007, and 2008. There were two from 2009

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and one from 2010. One of the books was published in Ireland; four were published in the United States, and the other three were published in the United Kingdom. Whilst some of these books were quite old, these were the materials that students were using as references for essays in developmental psychology. I checked the index in each book for listings of 'single mother', 'single parent family', and 'teenage mother' to see what they had to say on the topic. Two of the books contained no references to single motherhood at all in the index (Glassman and Hadad, 2009; Barnes, 1995). For the remaining 7 books, I checked to see what they had to say about young single motherhood. Some of these books have been updated and replaced at the time of writing. However, they are presented here to offer an example of the ways in which the 'variable' of single mother is given meaning, which constructs single motherhood as problematic, and the ways in which this approach leads to the reproduction of social values.

In the publications that I examined, the single parent family was frequently presented as being a deficient environment for child development. As such, consider the following excerpt from Schaffer (1996):

Single parenthood is associated with a variety of stresses; once again poverty is foremost. Children raised in mother-only families are less likely to do well at school, are more likely to be implicated in anti-social activities and have poorer occupational opportunities on leaving than offspring of intact families. (p348)

In this example, a number of assumptions are apparent. Poverty is identified as a source of stress for single parent families, which would seem reasonable. However, being poor is not a psychological problem and being poor does not, by definition, denote deficient

parenting. The quote goes on to describe single parent families as 'mother-only' families. This is certainly a very likely scenario; 93.15% of single parent households in 2011 in Ireland were mother only households (Central Statistics Office, 2011). However, the next sentence links 'mother-only' with performing 'less well at school', 'anti-social activities', and 'poorer occupational opportunities'. The presentation of this list in this way seems to imply that the 'mother-only' aspect of the children's experience is what causes the deficits that are attributed to single parent households, rather than, for example, poverty as a variable. Whilst this assumption of a causal effect may be criticised as poor science, which conflates correlation with causation, this was not an unusual presentation of data in psychology books for undergraduates.

The identification of these families as not 'intact' uses language of brokenness to describe single mother families, presenting them as potentially deficient. Another difficulty with this characterisation is that, elsewhere in these same publications, evidence is presented that around one third of children spend some period of their childhood in single parent households (Bee and Boyd, 2002). This would indicate that a third of children are struggling with deficient family situations due to being in a single parent household. It seems unlikely that all of these children, perform less well at school, engage in anti-social activities, and have poorer educational opportunities than those in 'intact' families.

In addition, the variable of psychological wellbeing is grounded in performance in work and education, with no justification of why this should be a measure of good parenting. There was one example of a study that utilised different measures of outcome from this. McKeown's (2003) study of family wellbeing in Ireland (cited in O'Brien, 2008) found that

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family type does not impact negatively on a child, in terms of measures of autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, and self-acceptance. Such measures seem to be much more appropriate ways of examining healthy psychological development, than measures which assume that preparation for participation in the market economy is the best psychological outcome. However, the variability of measures of child rearing success is interesting, in itself, in terms of what is assumed, or constructed as important for psychologists and the variables that are identified and measured.

In discussing teenage pregnancy, the books I examined identified a variable that was, in itself, problematic. Atkinson et al. (1990), for example, refer to teenage pregnancy as 'troubling' (p.104). They suggest that 'the problem' with teenage mothers has emerged in recent decades: an adolescent girl who became pregnant 25 years ago usually married or gave up her baby for adoption (around 90% according to Atkinson et al.), whereas, more recently, young mothers most frequently keep their infants, and raise them themselves .

Bee and Boyd (2002) offer a more nuanced account of teenage motherhood. They quote studies (citing McCarthy and Hardy, 1993; Osofsky, Hann and Peebles, 1993) that indicate that, when poverty and poor parental care are taken into account, 'the differences in rates of problem of teenage mothers disappear' (p. 75). They also acknowledge that the children of teenage mothers, who have help and support from their parents, are less likely to suffer negative effects (citing Birch, 1999; Uno, Florsheim and Uchino, 1998). However, they go on to say, 'girls whose mothers became sexually active at an early age and who bore their first child early are likely to follow a similar path' (p.288). They do not reference this claim but go on to say that this is an issue, as there has been an increase in the number of births

to teenage mothers *outside of marriage*; more than 80% of teens who gave birth in the 1960s were married, whilst in late 1990s only 20% of teenage mothers were married. In this case, the object that is identified as worthy of measurement is the age at which a woman becomes sexually active, along with marital status. The assumption that being young and unmarried and sexually active are in and of themselves psychological problems is taken for granted as a kind of everyday common sense on which these accounts are constructed.

There is no mention in any of the text books of psychological studies on the emotional impact on young women who gave up babies for adoption, nor work assessing the success, or otherwise, of marriages precipitated by an unplanned pregnancy during adolescence. No evidence is offered that the assumed deficits in the parenting abilities of teenage mothers are ameliorated if they are married to the fathers of the children, nor is there any discussion; except in the McKeown (2003) study in O'Brien (2008), of the psychological impact on teenage mothers of parenting whilst being defined as socially deviant. McKeown identified this as a cause of stress for mothers but as having little impact on children. These kinds of issue would seem to be more appropriate topics for psychological investigation than age and marital status, which seem to be more closely linked to social values. Whilst it could be argued that this use of common sense to identify variables is merely a poor application of scientific principles, these examples also demonstrate that teenage motherhood in these books from the 1990s, and the first decade of the 20th century, are identified as problematic for reasons that relate to social values, regarding out of wedlock parenting, and this is treated as a self-explanatory variable of deficiency or deviance.

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Comer and Gould (2010), in arguing that children with two parents have advantages over those raised by a single mother (Cuff et al., 2005; Harper et al., 2004; Hoffman, 2002), claim that children of two parent families 'display lower rates of juvenile delinquency, teenage pregnancy, drug use and incarceration' (p.74). The inclusion of teenage pregnancy, with a list including drug use and crime, certainly presents young single motherhood as a negative event and as deviant behaviour in and of itself. However, as I will discuss in chapter 3, studies in the United States and the United Kingdom suggest that socio economic deficits experienced by young single mothers can be attributable to social class. Furthermore, the evidence base that positions teenage mothers as deficient in their parenting has been disputed (Duncan, et al., 2010).

Burman (2008) describes this kind of presentation of academic work of using psychology as:

a tool for 'mental hygiene, a euphemism for the control and surveillance of populations deemed likely to be troublesome or burdensome - working-class children, single parents, minority groups and poor people the world over (p186-187).

As Burman argues, not only do the methods used reinforce social structures, but also in these examples, young single mothers are presented as the problematic variable that has been identified by expert psychologists. Furthermore, teenage fathers do not appear in these publications at all, as worthy of study or even appearing to exist. It seems then that some variables can be selected for study whilst others are made invisible by not being acknowledged at all.

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The examples from Bee and Boyd (2002) and Atkinson et al. (1990) did acknowledge changes in numbers of teenage mothers keeping their babies over time and changes in the social expectation that marriage is a necessary response to pregnancy. However, rather than noting, as this thesis will, that the meanings that are attached to marriage have changed over time, it identifies this change as 'the problem'. Moreover, the general law of human behaviour, which appears to have been held constant in these accounts, seems to be, that young single mothering is a psychological problem. Variables, then, appear in many cases to be constructions that are reflections of social values, rather than neutral items waiting to be measured.

As well as difficulties with the construction of variables, there is also a difficulty with the changing nature of the meanings of such variables. As I discussed in Chapter 1, the meanings attached to single motherhood and female sexuality vary in different historical periods. This will be discussed further in relation to Irish single motherhood in Chapter 3, but one single example illustrates this point. According to Heller (1996), the diagnosis of 'nymphomania' was originally applied to young women from wealthy families who were attracted to working class men. Clearly, a middle class woman who was attracted to a working class man in today's world would not be diagnosed with a mental health disorder on those grounds. It would appear that, the use of a mental health diagnosis in this context serves a specific social purpose, namely, constructing women who were regarded as sexual transgressors as being "mentally ill". This provides an illustration of how classification of sexual behaviour and its meaning can function as a way of controlling and managing female sexuality.

Certainly, both the construction of single mothers, as innately problematic, and the construction of middle class women, who have sex with working-class men as mentally ill, illustrate that the meanings attached to single motherhood and female sexuality vary according to the time and place in which they are talked about. The task of finding general laws of behaviour that can be attributed to young single mothers, is therefore not an aim of this study. The study will instead investigate the ways in which meanings associated with single motherhood are constructed and mobilised in the talk of women in socially situated contexts (Haraway, 1988): that the discursive resources that are available at a particular time and place constitute the ways of being. The study will also follow what McLeod and Thompson (2009) describe as, a 'turn to time' in social research, which acknowledges the changing nature of discourse across time.

This thesis, therefore, argues that a social constructionist approach (e.g. Berger and Luckmann, 1999; Gergen, 1985; Gergen and Davis, 1985; Harré, 1979) is the best route to understanding the troubled identities that arise in the context of single motherhood.

2.2 Socially constructed identities

Social constructionists take as their starting point the belief that humans become subjects as a result of discursive materials that are available to them. Identities, selves, persons, and subjectivity are terms that are open to contestation and debate over what they mean and how they are accomplished. The approach in this thesis is informed by the work of Michel Foucault (1988; 1986; 1977) who believed that identities are constructed in specific historical and contextual conditions. From this view, it is not possible to remove a person from context because context is what makes subjects. This approach rejects the concept

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of the self-conscious reflexive individual, as a pre-existing society and removable from it. Rather, it claims that people are products of a particular set of relationships with social institutions. In this vein, the assumed dualism of the individual and society is regarded as a function of one kind of society; one which has had a significant impact on the ways in which the topic of identities are understood in contemporary Western societies. This Cartesian self, with a consciousness that is separate from context, and which could be investigated phenomenologically, is therefore disputed by social constructionists. Elias (2008), for example, has argued that the notion of an individual independent of social context is a conceptual trap because the characteristics of personhood have no meaning outside of the cultural context in which they are situated.

Foucault's work followed three modes of inquiry into the ways in which humans are transformed into subjects (Foucault, 1982). The first mode of inquiry examined the sciences and the ways in which they create subjects by 'objectivising' them; for example, in the field of economics or in science. Foucault's second mode of inquiry investigated what he called 'dividing practices'. In this mode, Foucault argues, people are made subjects by being divided into categories: the deserving poor and the undeserving poor, for example, or perhaps 'fallen women' and chaste women. His third mode of inquiry was into the ways in which people make subjects of themselves, for which he used the domain of sexuality as an example (Foucault, 1986).

Of central importance to this context is the operation of power; he claimed that power was the most important factor in the production of subjects (1982). Foucault argued that selves are culturally and historically constituted, that they are brought into being by technologies

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of the self, and that they are observable in practices of the self. The self is thus understood as something that is actively constructed (Foucault, 1986). Technologies of the self are ways in which, as Foucault put it, 'our relation to ourselves' is constructed.

An examination of the relationship of power to the ways in which people become subjects, he argued, requires an analysis of power, not in relation to internal rationality, but by examination of resistance. This analysis of resistance, he argued, allowed him to identify the techniques of power. He divided these into four major types: technologies of production, which permit us to manipulate, transform, or produce things; technologies of signs and system, which allow the use of meaning; technologies of power, which regulate the conduct of individuals and allow them to be dominated; and technologies of the self, which permit individuals to manage their own ways of being and attain particular states such as happiness, wisdom, or immortality (Foucault, 1988).

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault (1977) used the example of the penal system to demonstrate how self-regulation is managed. He argued that the threat of being regarded as deviant is a means of social regulation and that over time it has become more efficient for those in charge of penal institutions to move away from direct coercion and instead utilise forms of disciplinary power. Disciplinary power in Foucault's conception involves examination, normalising judgements, and hierarchical observation. I want to return briefly to the quotation that I included in chapter 1, from women talking about their admission to Magdalene homes:

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When I got there they... (Religious staff)... took all your clothes off ...(crying)....
Cut all your hair off and bandaged you ... (breasts)... up so that you wouldn't
look like a girl, because your body was sin and belonged to the devil.

On the day of admission ... the nun said to me "from today on your name is
...X... (not own name)... don't tell anyone where you came from or who you
are". (JFM, 2010, p 19).

These quotations construct a stripping of identities using direct coercion in the context of an institution. For Foucault, this kind of direct coercion is no longer necessary because disciplinary power could be used for self-regulation. Direct coercion does, however, appear to have been used as a form of regulation in the relatively recent past in Ireland. To illustrate the idea of disciplinary power, Foucault used the example of Bentham's panopticon. The panopticon was a circular prison structure that contained a number of cells. Prisoners were put into cells in which they were separated from one another and unable to interact or communicate. Guards could see the prisoners but could not be seen by the prisoners. Constant observation, or the possibility of constant observation, what Foucault described as 'the gaze', was in time internalised and resulted in self-regulation or technologies of the self: the ways individuals act upon themselves to produce identities that are constituted in and through culture. In this conception, subjectification of the self was accomplished through the influence of this imagined gaze, which was the motivation of individuals to take up particular kinds of discursive positions. Furthermore, people who do not conform become problematized and may thus be subject to social interventions such as institutionalisation or social exclusion. For Foucault, then, it is not sufficient to examine the subject as defined by discursive positions. Rather, it is necessary to investigate

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how subjectivities come into being by examining the discursive resources that are utilised when subjectivities are taken up. In this conception, people are not entities with personal histories; rather, they are the targets of different and particular kinds of work on them. Furthermore, psychological systems are not continuous but varied. This means that different kinds of subjectivities are taken up at different times and in different contexts.

One of the kinds of power that was of interest to Foucault was the political power of the state in Western society. He argued that this power had integrated the old power structures of Christian churches, what he described as pastoral power, into its own functions (Foucault, 1982). Pastoral power meant that the church could offer salvation, command sacrifice, take care of whole communities, and know and direct the conscience. He went on to argue that the new kind of state that he identified also took up pastoral power. The salvation that the Church provides is for the afterlife, whereas the state, he argued, provides health and finance in this life. Group care, he claimed, is provided by the state in the form of community facilities such as hospitals. The third way in which he believed that the state took on the pastoral power that the church had once held was by working on the individual and providing education.

In an Irish context, this is particularly interesting since, historically, the state and the Catholic Church worked together to provide schools and hospitals. For instance, although primary schools in Ireland are funded through state taxation, 96% of primary schools are owned by religious institutions; 90% of these by the Catholic Church (DES, 2014). Similarly, the institutions in Ireland that I described in Chapter 1; the industrial schools, the Magdalene laundries, and the mother and baby homes, were owned by the Catholic Church

(or in some cases the Church of Ireland) and funded in various degrees by the Irish state. In Foucault's theorisation, Christian Forms of governance have taken a number of forms over time; for example, as I discussed in Chapter 1, Christian ethics appear to have been guiding ethical principles, in aspirations for the Irish people by the government who produced the 1937 Constitution.

According to Rose (2008), technologies of the self are closely related to governance; practices of domination and control relating to how the self and others are governed and who will accept being governed by whom. Rose (1996) has also argued that, in contemporary Western society, particular kinds of subjects have been brought into being as a result of big shifts in the political discourse, resulting in neoliberal governance. Hamann (2009) defines neoliberal governance as 'the conduct of conduct', and argues that the central aim of neoliberal governmentality is the creation of conditions for a subjectivity that is guided by market principles. The neoliberal subject is morally responsible for ensuring that financial self-interest (as distinct from the principles of freedom in liberal governance) is the guiding ethical value. This approach, Hamann argues, has meant that poverty and disadvantage are judged as personal failures. For Rose (1996), neoliberal subjects are brought into being through institutional practices, technologies of marketing, and consumption, which means that citizens are governed into understanding themselves as autonomous, responsible, choice making individuals. In this context, choice is a form of subjectivity, rather than an actual claim to human agency.

Rose (2008) argues that Foucault's work does not require a theory of agency because there is no need for one. Instead, agency can be seen in resistance, which is necessary because

of the varying technologies of the self that act on individuals. Agency arises in human behaviour because technologies of the self are in constant contradictory relation, making conflicting demands on the subject. Rose uses the example of when the techniques of the self of uniqueness and worthiness run up against techniques relating to oneself as the target of discipline, duty, and docility, or when humanism and authenticity is pitted against collective responsibility; 'Within these different practices persons are addressed as different sorts of human being, acted upon as if they were different sorts of human being' (p.321).

Taking this assumption as the basis for understanding what a human being is – the ontology of the person – has implications for how psychology can be done. The next section will discuss the ways in which Foucault's approach to understanding subjectivity has been taken up by discursive psychologists and will outline some of the methodological approaches in psychology that inform this thesis.

2.3 Examining talk

Foucault's understanding of subjectivity is very different from the ways in which individuals are understood in experimental psychology, which is the dominant form of social psychology in North America and Europe (McGhee, 1996). However, Foucault's approach was taken up, following a 'crisis' in social psychology (Elms, 1975), which called into question the underlying assumptions of cognitive experimental work in relation to subjectivity, the purpose of psychology, and the best ways to understand human behaviour.

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A psychology which investigated subjectivities that are brought into being by pre-existing discourses, required a number of conceptual shifts in understanding the person and in understanding how subjectivities can be studied. Most importantly, if subjects are brought into being by discourse, it follows that a very important way of understanding people is by examining talk. Whilst other ways of examining discourse and social practices can be valuable in understanding identities, talk is a particularly useful resource because it allows people to offer explanations, argue and justify meanings, contradictions and personhood. This allowed me to be attentive to the immediate and interactional aspects of talk and the ways in which talk is worked up in this context as distinct from more formally written texts. Potter and Wetherell (1987) produced the first application of discourse theory in the field of psychology. In addition to drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, they were also influenced by theorisation in ethnomethodology: sense-making in everyday interactions. Ethnomethodological work of people such as Goffman (1955) and Garfinkel (1967, 1983) influenced this approach and drew attention to the ways in which social order is produced through everyday patterns of interaction and social practices. The work of Barthes (1972) was also useful in establishing the importance of the meanings that are attached to words. In addition, in the field of linguistics, Austin (1962) had advanced the idea that words, rather than being a transparent medium for communication, actually accomplish things: that language forms the basis for social action. At around this time, Sacks (1972) had begun to develop conversation analysis as a way of examining the patterned nature of talk in interaction and this approach was integrated into discursive psychological inquiry too.

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Potter and Wetherell (1987) argued that when psychologists attempt to study inner experiences or thoughts, they are, in fact, examining discourse. For this reason, they argued, in order to understand subjectivity, that talk must be the focus of investigation. They further drew attention to the ways in which talk accomplishes social action and the ways in which identities and selves are argued into being in interaction using pre-existing meanings.

In their book, *Discourse and Social Psychology: Beyond Attitudes and Behaviour* (1987), Potter and Wetherell demonstrated the application of discursive psychological analyses to various topics in psychology such as attitudes and categorisation. Their approach paid attention to the ways in which subjectivities are taken up in talk and interaction. They developed the concept of interpretative repertoire to explain the 'relatively internally consistent, bounded language units' that are based on shared meanings within specific social contexts. They argued that interpretative repertoires are used flexibly to construct actions in interaction and talk (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p.171).

The approach of discursive psychology informs this thesis. In addition to interpretative repertoires, a number of other analytic tools have been used to make sense of the ways in which subjectivities are taken up in talk. The remainder of this sub section will examine subject positions, ideology, joint action, and narrative analysis, all of which will inform my own analysis. I will then go on to discuss debates and developments within discursive psychology, which have led to some separation between conversation analytically influenced work and work which draws on Foucauldian principles and discourse at the

structural level. The development of critical discursive psychology will be discussed and I will argue for my own stance in following Wetherell's (1998) synthetic approach.

2.3.1 Subject positions

The concept of subject position is an important analytical tool in discursive psychology.

Harré (2012) describes subject positions as potentially short term disputable rights and duties conferred on individuals, which allow them to perform particular kinds of meaningful action. Subject positions are taken up in the context in which people interact and are used flexibly based on the available discursive resources. Positioning thus has direct moral implications for available identities.

One of the first examples of positioning theory was the work of Wendy Hollway (1989). Her research demonstrated the ways in which gendered positions are taken up. She identified three dominant discourses relating to sexuality: the have / hold discourse, the permissive discourse, and the male sexual drive discourse. Each of these is immediately recognisable as a position that is available in contemporary Western society. The male sexual drive discourse, positions women as responsible for men's sexual behaviour because they cannot manage it themselves. The have / hold discourse presents a version of sexuality that positions women as motivated by commitment to a man and motherhood, and the permissive discourse challenges the monogamy of have / hold and positions women as seeking out and enjoying sex without the desire for a relationship. An important aspect of Hollway's research was that it highlighted the flexible ways in which identities can be taken up in talk, but also that talk is doing something when it is utilised. Identities can

be ongoing and changing and people in varying life circumstances or interactive contexts may harness different positions in varying ways.

2.3.2 Ideology and rhetoric

The kinds of discourse that are available and the ways in which they are mobilised was discussed in the work of Michael Billig. Billig (1991) argues that discourses are based on ideology. For Billig, ideology is not contrasted with truth; rather, it is a set of beliefs embedded in discourse. He argues that often such ideologies are used with such regularity that they attain the status of 'common sense' and become understandings that are not even questioned. An example of this, which I will discuss further in chapter 3, is the ways in which it has become 'common sense' in certain societies, that bonding with a mother, and single caregiver is essential for the well-being of children (Bowlby, 1969).

Billig (1987) also argued for the flexibility of talk. He claims that when people talk they are arguing versions of events, rhetorically. In addition, he argued that talk is performative. This performance is argumentative and rhetorical. As Billig puts it, 'Humans do not converse because they have inner thoughts to express, but they have thoughts to express because they converse' (Billig, 1987, p.111). From this view, meaning is already present in society and is utilised flexibly by people in ways that allow them to present socially meaningful versions of themselves and others.

For Billig, to fully understand the rhetorical and argumentative nature of talk, it is necessary to be aware of the positions that are being countered or refuted or against which a justification is being argued. To illustrate this point, he used the metaphor of people as

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students or scholars working within a particular tradition and utilising available knowledge in ways that support arguments. Furthermore, Billig regards talk and the rhetorical action that accompanies it as context dependant. A young woman may announce her pregnancy in very different ways, depending on whether or not she is married and depending on who she is telling.

Furthermore, ideologies are drawn upon in different ways and for varying purposes in different contexts. The result is that positions are often taken up which are contradictory and variable. Billig has called these contradictions that arise in talk ideological dilemmas. This variability is, in itself, of interest, because it allows us to trace the ways in which competing ideologies are cobbled together in varying contexts and for various rhetorical purposes. The ways in which ideological dilemmas are negotiated, or not, as the case may be, allow us to examine some of the ways in which power is implicated in the management of identities.

An important aspect of identity management is quite frequently the omission of certain information and silence on certain topics. Certainly, as chapter 1 has already demonstrated, there have been substantial silences in Irish public discourse in relation to single motherhood – so it also seems that what can be said and what cannot be said is context dependant and relevant to the historical time period. Billig (2006) claims that silences are part of the rhetorical activity that arises in talk. In theorising this aspect of talk, he draws on the language of psychoanalysis and uses the term ‘discursive repression’. For Billig, this is not an unconscious process in the way that it is in psychoanalytic thought (Frosh, 1989, discusses these theories). Rather, discursive repression is observable in

everyday interaction. People refrain from saying certain things, which may not be considered 'polite'. Discursive repression is, therefore, for Billig (2006), a form of rhetorical strategy that is used to accomplish some forms of action in talk but also prevent others.

2.3.3 Joint action

A central aspect of the use of language as a route to understanding subjectivity is the recognition that it is a shared resource and that identities are constructed within interactions. From this view, minds and selves are a collation of fragments of talk that are socially and culturally embedded in a particular context. Identities and selves are not fixed but are worked up within interactions. Shotter (1993) calls this the radical indeterminacy of 'joint action'. In using this phrase, Shotter draws attention to the flexible and variable versions of identities that are worked up collaboratively in talk. Although identities are socially constructed, he argues, they are constructed in ways that are flexible and dependent on the specifics of a particular conversation and the collaborations that happen within it. Thus, identities are too variable and indeterminate to be amenable to the experimental goals of prediction and control. Rather, orderly realities are constructed within the context of people's disorderly conversational activities. The consideration of joint action is particularly important for this thesis because the research involves talking with families about matters that impact on all of them.

2.3.4 Narrative analysis

One form of discursive investigation, which has yielded some valuable insights, comes from narrative psychology. Narrative psychologists examine the intersection between the unique circumstances of people's lives and the meanings that are at play in wider society

and culture (Crossley, 2000). Narrative psychologists have identified structures in autobiographical stories (e.g. Gergen and Gergen, 1988; Bruner, 1987). Narrative studies have also noted that the stories people tell are inclined to have a purpose and 'go somewhere' (Bruner, 1990). They identify ways in which people narrate their lives to others, demonstrating meaning and purpose with an event, an outcome, and an emotional response. Speakers pick out particular aspects of their lives that are noteworthy and significant or surprising. Crossley (2000), for example, found that narratives of illness can characterise the illness as an interruption in a person's identity, a breach in the order of everyday life, and that often these stories tell of 'becoming a completely different person' afterwards.

Similarly, a personal narrative could be constructed as a heroic journey (Gergen, 1998), in which the person triumphs in the face of adversity or as a person who makes choices about how they become a mother (Crossley, 2007). Whereas Crossley's work is focused on the ways in which identities are worked up moment to moment within interactions, Taylor and Littleton (2006) use a narrative-discursive approach to explore both continuities and fragmentation in the ways in which life narratives are constructed. They argue that discourses are often part of a longer conversation with participants who are not present in the interaction, and that narratives often rehearse versions of the self, which allow for continuities in identity constructions to be established. They draw attention to the rehearsed quality of many narratives. In the case of family discussions, this seems to be a particularly useful way of examining talk, since families have a history of talking together over time and it will be interesting to see how this is constructed in talk.

2.4 Debates in discourse

Within these many approaches to understanding identities through the use of language, a variety of debates have emerged about the best way to study and analyse language (Schegloff, 1997; Wetherell, 1998; Billig, 1999a; Schegloff, 1999a; Billig, 1999b) and the kinds of talk that should be selected for analysis (e.g. Potter & Hepburn, 2005). There has, consequently, been a separation between some theorists working in a conversation analytic framework and those who use methods which locate research in social and cultural discursive contexts. Some conversation analysts (Schegloff, 1999a; Schegloff, 1999b) have argued that discourse analysis should focus only on the content of the conversations between the speakers and should not go beyond this data, because this is an imposition by the analyst. On the other side of the debate (Billig, 1999a; Billig, 1999a), it is argued that conversation analysts still bring their own contextual knowledge to the analysis of data. From this division, at least two distinct traditions have emerged in discursive psychology: conversation analysis and critical discursive psychology. This thesis will draw on the latter of these two - critical discursive psychology - because a knowledge of the cultural and historical context in which women talk about young single motherhood is essential for a full analysis and understanding of the ways in which the women manage the topic in talk. As Billig (1991) has argued, the rhetorical nature of talk means that often the things that are said are a response to a conversation that is not present. This approach is, therefore, essential to understanding a topic that has been the subject of silence and invisibility in recent Irish history.

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This is not to suggest that conversation analysis does not have important evidence to offer. Some fascinating insights have been drawn from research informed by conversation analysis. Kitzying and Frith (1999), for example, examined training offered to young women in order to help them refuse unwanted sexual advances. Drawing on previous research, they argued that the norms around refusal involve particular patterns of response. Generally, refusals are almost always presented with hedges and hesitations, rather than delivered forcefully, because refusals have been found to be 'dispreferred' responses (Pomerantz, 1984). Kitzying and Frith (1999) conclude that attempting to teach young women to refuse unwanted sexual advances in ways that are emphatic and overt, which is what rape prevention training does, is a breach of the usual conversational patterns. It would appear then that programmes which instruct women that their communication skills need to be more overt to avoid rape, implicitly blame women who do get raped for not communicating their wishes clearly enough. This attention to the detail of talk and interaction is, therefore, well suited for uncovering some of the ways in which power structures social knowledge and in which meanings are socially constructed. However, it is also important to note, that this piece of research is based on a culturally held understanding that women are responsible for refusals and that this is embedded in the culture within which the research took place. The kinds of talk which reproduce the idea that rape is potentially the fault of the victim and that women are responsible for preventing rape, are part of the discursive context that prompted this piece of research in the first place. An analysis of the ways in which rape and sexual assault are constructed in everyday discourse can only add to what is already a valuable piece of research. Wetherell

(1998) has proposed a synthetic approach to analysis of talk. She argues that, for a complete scholarly analysis of talk, it is not sufficient to attend only to the technical aspects of language use. Wetherell (1988) demonstrates the ways in which different forms of what have been termed discourse analysis can be used to illuminate different aspects of talk. She argues:

My aim was not to endorse this division of labour – conversation analysis then ethnomethodology then post-structuralist analysis or ethnography of communication or critical discourse analysis - but to suggest that for social psychological discursive projects a more synthetic approach is required focused on the development of analytic concepts which work across some of these domains such as, for instance, the notion of positioning, interpretative repertoires, ideological dilemmas, and so on (p397).

From this view an analysis which is sensitive both to social context and to the ways in which talk is ordered during the minutiae of interaction is the most fruitful and informative way of analysing talk. The context of the interpretative repertoires on which subjects draw, she argues, make offer a ways of examining why a particular utterance is identifiable in the first place. It is this approach that will inform my own analysis of the talk of single mothers and their families.

2.4.1 Feeling and talk

Another area of debate and development in discursive psychology relates to the ways in which discursive methodologies can be applied to affect or emotion and indeed their

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adequacy for the task (e.g. Blackman and Cromby, 2007). The topic of single motherhood, as was apparent in Chapter 1, is one which is infused with emotional content; indignation at the treatment of single mothers; sorrow at the death of Ann Lovett; shame at being categorised as a 'fallen woman'; the list could go on and on. It is sufficient to say that it is important to the topic and relevant to what Clough and Halley (2007) describe as a turn to affect.

Emotion has been theorised in a variety of ways, often being regarded as different from or separate to talk. From a discursive perspective, Wetherell (2012) describes emotion as:

An emotion like anger or fear is not inside the self, as basic emotions research assumes, but is in relation to others, a response to a situation and to the world. An emotion is a relational pattern and as such is automatically distributed and located across the psychosocial field. Affect is never wholly owned, always intersecting and interacting (p.24).

Discursive psychological investigations of emotion have examined cultural and historical variability in the emotional meanings that are available; the ways in which emotion talk is utilised for justifying, accounting for various kinds of actions or events; and the patterns and regularities that emerge in talk of affect. Edwards (2001) argues that what is of importance in emotion talk is how emotions are defined, categorised, and contrasted with other emotions, and what these activities accomplish.

When examining historical variation in emotion talk, Gillis (1988), for example, traces the emergence of the concept of romantic love as a relatively recent phenomenon, which was often separate and unrelated to marital pairing. Likewise, McDougal (2016) claims that emotional negativity attached to illegitimacy did not apply in the middle ages. Using the

example of William the Conqueror, she argues that the shame attached to his bastardy was not related to the lack of a marriage between his parents - because this had no impact on lineage or inheritance - but because it was a slur about the lack of social status of his maternal grandfather, who was a tanner. His mother was thus regarded as the result of a 'mixed marriage' at that time. The social stigmatisation, and consequent humiliation and name calling, then, was related to social status and lineage, rather than connected to the out of wedlock childbearing. These approaches are useful to the study of emotion for demonstrating the variable ways in which emotions have been constructed in different times and historical periods. This is useful from a discursive perspective because it shows the ways in which various kinds of subjectivity are made available (Foucault, 1982). As McAvoy (2015) puts it:

What people can know, do, think, and feel, are formed in and by regimes of knowledges and practices that constitute the world in particular ways, and generate particular ways of doing things (p.25)

Rose (2008) has argued that emotions are forms of technology of the self, which regulate behaviour. Emotions such as shame and disgust, for example, can be related to the kinds of subjectivities that are available in certain historical contexts. The 'fallen woman', for example, is likely to be constructed with indignation in current circumstances but was once, as was discussed in chapter 1, a cause for shame. For Nichols (2003), moral orders are implicated in affective practices. He argues that norms and moral orders (he uses the terms interchangeably) are maintained and sustained by the emotion that is attached to them. Local rules, about when a woman may or may not become pregnant, are crucial to the meaning of that pregnancy and thus have important consequences for emotion.

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Wetherell (2012) reviews the contribution of Bourdieu's (1998; 1984) concept of habitus to our understanding of emotions. Habitus might usefully be understood as the system of dispositions and experiences that are culturally available in particular social contexts. It can be thought of as socialised norms and tendencies that guide behaviour. Bourdieu argues that emotion and affect act as conservative forces because they serve to reinforce the power of past practice. If a person is in violation of the habitus, it can cause anxiety. Emotion and affect have also been linked to access to power and can increase or diminish it. The concept of emotional capital suggests that some kinds of affective capital open up access to resources of different kinds (Wetherell, 2012). For example, maternal love and devotion to children may well open up a route to respectability and social value.

Emotion has also been studied in relation to narrative structure. Lupton (1998) demonstrates the ways in which emotions are narrated in relation to natural emotion, in opposition to reasoned control. By using a construction of loss of control, Lupton argues, gives the story a sense of the realness of the emotion that is under discussion and offers an explanation for its affective consequences.

In addition to the study of the ways in which emotion categories are taken up as subject positions, the examination of the ways in which emotions are jointly coordinated in family situations is also important for this research. Emotions, like other kinds of discursive resource, are shared in interactions of family members and are directly relevant to the subjectivities that are available to the participants.

From a discursive perspective, Edwards (1997) argues that language and thought are not separate but that 'internal' states, such as motives, beliefs, and feelings, are discursive

constructions that are produced for ourselves and others in discourse. Rather than relating experiences through language, this approach says that we come to know our experiences because of the language resources that are available to us, for use within a particular social context. Discursive strategies are thus utilised to work up reactions as reactions, or for blaming, excuses and accounts. This allows us to think through the ways in which social legitimacy are negotiated in families. As Edwards (2005) notes, within interactions people are attentive to how they will be perceived and evaluated and may attempt to avoid potentially negative identities or subject positions; for example, being positioned as judgemental. Emotion and affect are therefore treated as forms of discursive construct and action in this thesis but also as related to the kinds of subjectivities that are available in the context of single motherhood. They are of particular significance because the thesis is focused on the trouble that arises in identity construction. This has specific affective consequences, which are played out in the talk of the participants. The approach to talk of emotion in this thesis will, therefore, follow calls for the synthesis of affect and language as intertwined parts of subjectivity and the dissolution of any dualism between language and affect (McAvoy, 2015; Wetherell, 2012).

2.5 Chapter conclusions

This chapter has discussed the theoretical basis for this thesis. I have argued that, for a thorough understanding of single motherhood, and in particular single motherhood across generations, the isolation of variables and the measurement of outcomes is not the most useful starting point. Rather, the approach taken is one that understands identities as socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1991; Gergen, 1999).

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Foucault's (1982) modes of inquiry into how subjectivities are made available in talk was presented as the basis for understanding the ways in which identities are made available in discourse. The discussion also presented some of the technologies that, Foucault argues, construct subjectivities; in particular, in relation to governance of the church and the state. Rose's (1996) theorisation of neoliberal subjectivities in Foucauldian theory was argued to be relevant as a dominant form of identity in Western society.

The ways, in which the lines of inquiry opened up by the work of Foucault (1977; 1982; 1986) have been developed in psychology, were presented, with an account of Potter and Wetherell's (1987) ground-breaking work in discursive psychology. This work drew on influences from linguistics (Austin, 1962), as well as ethnomethodology (Goffman, 1983; Garfinkel, 1967), as well as the, at that time, newly emerging conversation analysis of Sacks (1972).

The chapter went on to provide an overview of some of the analytic concepts that inform discursive psychology: interpretative repertoires (Potter and Wetherell, 1987); subject positions (Davies and Harré, 2003); ideology and rhetoric (Billig, 1987; 1991); and the importance of joint action (Shotter, 1993). A brief account of the development of narrative analysis and its application within discursive psychology (Taylor and Littleton, 2006) was also provided.

Some of the debates in discursive psychology that are relevant to this thesis were also outlined. I argue, following Wetherell (1998), that a synthetic approach, which combines the orientation to the technical procedures for sense making in talk (Schegloff, 1997) with the Foucauldian orientation of the approaches of critical discursive psychology, is the most

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fruitful approach for my research. Similarly, affect is argued to be usefully regarded as a discursive resource but one that is inseparable from talk and is made available by the prevailing technologies (McAvoy, 2015; Wetherell, 2012). An important aspect of this theorisation is that, in this thesis, it will be applied to troubled identities; those which do not fit neatly with the ideal identities that are available in public discourse. It is to these identities that the next chapter turns.

Chapter 3. The making of 'happy maidens'

In Chapter 1, I referred to a speech made by An Taoiseach, Eamonn DeValera, on St Patrick's Day in 1943, in which he imagined identities for Irish people. The title of this chapter is a reference to this speech and refers to how women were "constructed" in this vision. He refers to 'the laughter of happy maidens, whose firesides would be forums for the wisdom of serene old age' (RTÉ archives, 1943). This chapter is about the ways in which 'happy maidens' in Ireland are constructed in talk. In it, I offer an account of some of the ways in which motherhood has been understood and how maternal roles have been constructed. In doing so, it examines the construction of childhood and some of the most prominent discourses in relation to the care of children. The chapter then turns to the regulation of women's sexual behaviour and the stigmatisation of certain kinds of sexual behaviour. Single motherhood in Ireland is then explored, along with some social and demographic changes in relation to single motherhood. The chapter will argue that there has been a shift in focus from the stigmatization of all single motherhood, generally, to the stigmatisation of teenage mothers or those who appear to be teenage, and who are likely to be welfare dependant, and without a partner.

3.1 Mothering

In her classic text, 'Of Woman Born', Adrienne Rich (1976) made a careful analysis of the institution of motherhood. She argued that in patriarchal cultures motherhood has been defined in ways that attribute almost superhuman powers to mothers, whilst also working

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to keep them powerless. A mother is thus regarded as self-sacrificing, resourceful, capable, and indispensable to the wellbeing of her child or children. However, her loyalty and sacrifice also rob her of her ability to be powerful and independent outside of the home. Changes in many post-industrial societies since the Second World War have meant that many women have had increasing opportunities to manage fertility and engage with education and the world of work. This should potentially have allowed women the opportunity to take up identities that are not primarily defined in relation to mothering. However, theorists in the field of mothering studies argue that gains, in terms of independence, made by career women are lost when they become mothers (O'Brien-Hallstein, 2011). Furthermore, some theorists have identified what Douglas and Michaels (2004) call 'New Momism'; a romanticised version of the mothering of the 1950s. New Momism constructs mothers as spending all of their time caring for children and, it is argued, has become a dominant way of understanding motherhood. This twenty-first century ideal in the Western world represents a return to essentialist notions of motherhood, which present an ideal mother as one who sacrifices her career because of the assumed biological imperative to nurture her children (O'Reilly, 2010). This supposed 'ideal' is only possible for a small number of middle class women who attain moral status (if not actual social power) as a result of choosing their 'natural' purpose, as O'Brien Hallstein (2011) argue, because it is so labour intensive and time consuming.

Douglas and Michaels (2004) claim that 'new Momism' was absorbed from consumption of media. This claim was investigated, using questionnaire research by Henderson et al. (2010). They found that, rather than attributing the source of their ideas of motherhood

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to media, most women claimed that the primary influence of their mothering was other mothers because they were 'surveilled' by other mothers. In addition, an interesting outcome in the study was that a quarter of the respondents wrote additional notes on the questionnaire and stated that their main source of influence was from surveillance from 'self', through guilt. This underlines one of the issues with a great deal of positivist inspired research: that the variables that are offered for measurement are constructed by researchers and may not offer all the variables or even the most important ones. Henderson et al. (2010) included these hand written additions within their analysis and concluded that interpersonal monitoring and self-surveillance were the main motivations for the need to, as Douglas and Michaels put it, 'put on the doting, self-sacrificing mother and wear it at all times. With intensive mothering, everyone watches us, we watch ourselves, and we watch ourselves watching ourselves. Motherhood has become a psychological police state' (p.6).

3.1.1 Constructing childhood constructing parenting

The ways in which motherhood is constructed are linked to understandings of what it means to be a child. In his sociology of childhood in Europe, Ariés (1962) argues that, prior to the 17th century, children and childhood were constructed in entirely different ways to those that are assumed today. The high mortality rate amongst children until the 17th century, he claims, meant that parents understood children as 'neutral' beings, poised between life and death, rather than as individuals or as vulnerable and in need of care, as they came to be understood. As rates of infant mortality decreased, Ariés (1962) argues, a culture of childhood emerged, along with increased affection and attention paid to

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children. This change in the ways in which childhood was constructed, coincided with economic changes. This in turn began a move towards the requirement that children be educated, resulting in their separation from the world of work and a greater differentiation between children and adults.

Alongside the development of childhood, Ariés (1962) claims, the family as a distinct and separate unit, the nuclear family, began to be represented in popular culture. Representations of families with mothers 'taking care' of children, appeared in calendars and other forms of pictorial representation that were popular at the time. Prior to this period, he claims, living arrangements of masters, servants and various relatives were the norm.

The development of distinct family units in the form of the nuclear family, in turn, led to greater responsibility for childcare within small family settings. Ermann, Ponsford, Spence and Wright (2014) argue that, in the years leading up to the turn of the 20th century, there was a new attention to parenting practices, leading to the advent of books offering advice on how to raise children. Although the books were called parenting books, they were primarily aimed at mothers. Franzblau (1999) has argued that the influence of positivism, psychoanalysis, and evolution combine in a grand narrative, from which emerged one of the greatest influences on theories of childcare - attachment theory.

3.1.2 Attachment theories

Some of the most influential work on the development of attachment relationships in infancy and early childhood stem from attachment theory, proposed by Bowlby (1969,

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1973, 1980). This approach is focused on the developing relationship between an infant and his or her primary care giver (generally the mother) and the impact this has on development. In developing attachment theory, Bowlby drew on a number of sources, primarily ethology and psychodynamics. Bowlby proposed that infants are biologically pre-disposed to attach to the mother and maintain proximity to her in order to ensure physical safety, in a similar way to the way in which young birds were observed by Lorenz (1965) to imprint on the first thing they see after hatching. In human infants, Bowlby suggested, attachment to a single caregiver develops in the first year of life and is the basis for the ways in which emotional attachments develop throughout the lifespan. 'Internal working models' about how relationships work, are formed at this time as a result of the levels of 'sensitivity' displayed by the mother, he suggested. The theory has been criticised on a number of grounds. It was criticised for its focus on the mother as the primary attachment figure (which I will explore later in this chapter) and it was criticised in relation to methodology; Bowlby arrived at his theory based on his observations of very disturbed adolescent boys living in residential care. He surmised that the reason for their antisocial behaviour was a lack of 'mother love'.

However, Bowlby's theories were tested using an observational method developed by Ainsworth, et al. (1978). They developed a means of categorising the quality of attachments in infants of around a year old, using a technique known as the 'strange situation'. In this quasi experimental technique, the reaction of an infant to the return of its mother, having been briefly left alone with a stranger, was observed. These researchers identified three distinct kinds of attachment, which they termed 'securely attached',

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'avoidant', and 'resistant'. For Ainsworth et al. (1978), a securely attached child is one who is distressed by separation from the mother, but is easily comforted on her return; an avoidant child is one who is not greatly distressed at being left with a stranger and who does not urgently seek proximity with the mother on her return; and a resistant child is deeply distressed by the separation and both seeks comfort and resists it upon the mother's return. Secure attachment is seen as the most desirable outcome, whilst the other two approaches are regarded as indicative as a failure in maternal sensitivity.

Attachment studies have been repeated across a range of studies and have been found across a range of cultural settings. Children in cultures as diverse as the USA, Israel, Botswana, and Guatemala all appear to exhibit intensified distress from around the age of seven months, when separated from the mother (Super and Harkness, 1998).

However, the specific physical setting, the organisation of environments and schedules and patterns of care the child experiences need to be considered, in relation to the pattern of attachment that is observed and how we choose to interpret it. Cultural variations in attachment patterns have also been identified and these raise questions about interpretations of the attachment categories observed and, in particular, the assumption that categorisation of 'secure attachment' is the ideal and healthy manifestation of sensitive mothering. For example, Super and Harkness (1998) note that !Kung San infants do not manifest the same level or duration of distress exhibited by American children on separation from the mother, but are deeply distressed by the presence of a stranger. This difference can be attributed to the kinds of care to which the child becomes accustomed in different cultural settings. For !Kung San infants, care from people other than the

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mother is a usual and expected form of care, but children in this culture almost never encounter strangers. Conversely, children in countries such as the United States and England become accustomed to more exclusive maternal care but encounter strangers on an almost daily basis. This suggests that the meaning the encounter has for the child is crucial to our understanding of the categorisation of attachment and that this meaning is contingent upon the patterns of care the child experiences in a particular social and cultural context.

There have also been variations across cultures in the proportion of children who are allocated to the three attachment categories: secure, avoidant, and resistant (van IJzendoorn and Kroonenberg, 1988). Whilst secure attachment is the most common category amongst infants in Britain, Japan, Germany, and the US, the patterning, of avoidant attachment and resistant behaviour, highlight additional issues relating to the beliefs and expectations of the infant. Japanese children, for example, appear to be much more likely to react in a resistant fashion upon being reunited with their mother, than in an avoidant fashion. For Shaffer (1996), this difference can be explained by the fact that Japanese children are almost never separated from their mothers and would therefore be much more intensely distressed by such a separation than children who are accustomed to occasional separations. Children in Germany, on the other hand, demonstrate anxious avoidant behaviour far more often than children in the other countries, possibly for the opposite reason: that separation from the mother is not as strange a situation for a German infant as it is for a Japanese child. The labelling of the categories is therefore the result of sets of cultural values about mothering in the United States and Britain, which assume that

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a child, who is distressed by separation from his or her mother, is securely attached, presumably because this is how babies who are 'mothered sensitively' *should* react. Researchers in a German setting, for example, might equally have labelled children who were unconcerned at being left with a stranger as 'secure', rather than 'avoidant', with children who could only be comforted by their mother labelled as 'insecure'. Likewise, the assumption that the intense distress of Japanese children upon separation from the mother is 'resistant' might have been interpreted as a more intense attachment than the traditional 'secure' category, thus signifying greater maternal sensitivity. Levine and Miller (1990) argue that this demonstrates that what is considered desirable or 'correct' attachments is defined and categorised on the basis of research carried out in Britain and America and is thus a function of the cultural beliefs of the researchers (Levine and Miller, 1990).

Bowlby's theory was criticised on the basis of *monotropism*: the assumption that children need one carer; usually the mother. This was a foundation stone of Bowlby's theory and is the cultural assumption in the society in which the theory was developed. However, mothers have been found to take full responsibility for the exclusive care of their infant in only 60% of societies (Weisner and Gallimore, 1977). An example of alternative care practices is provided by Tronick and Morelli (cited in Schaffer, 1996) who observed childcare patterns amongst Efe pygmies and found that infants in this community are cared for, and form attachments to, around fourteen adults and children within their social group. The researchers conclude that this pattern of child rearing is essential for the security of infants, where there is a strong likelihood that the mother could die and thus become unavailable for the infant. If the constant care of a single attachment figure is not

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the usual pattern of care in a particular culture, then it follows that attachment to a single person may not be as necessary for the wellbeing of children as attachment theories claim. Assuming that the mother is the necessary attachment, which a child can use as a 'secure base' for exploration in the world, overlooks other kinds of attachments, which presumably work equally well. Infants have been found to attach to a range of people other than the mother, including those who attach to their carer in a kibbutz (Sagi, et al., 1985); day-care staff (Goosens and van IJzendoorn, 1990); those who attach to siblings (Weisner and Gallimore, 1977); and those who attach to male figures (usually the father) (Cohen and Campos, 1974).

Super and Harkness (1988) argue that what has developed in relation to child rearing is a set of 'ethnotheories'; socially and culturally shared beliefs about the nature of child development and the kinds of goals that are acceptable and desirable. Considering culture from this perspective, Cole (1988) argues that human beings use culture as the instrument of development. He goes on to suggest that attachment, as measured by the strange situation technique, is not culturally sensitive because it ignores the differing developmental goals of parents in different cultural contexts. In relation to maternal sensitivity, for example, observations that compare maternal behaviour in New York and Tokyo (Bornstein et al. cited in Cole, 1992) found that, whilst infants' orientation to their mothers was the same in each context, the ways in which mothers responded to infants differed. American mothers responded to their infants when the infants focused on objects, whilst Japanese mothers responded when they focussed on the mother. Such variation in the mothers' style of response is thus constructed by implicit assumptions, on

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the part of the mother, about the nature and goals of development. Similarly, Tobin, et al. (1998) found that, in a Japanese context, behavioural difficulties with a child were interpreted as 'disorders of amae' (p.270); difficulties with the ability to depend on the group. Such an approach might easily be contrasted with the implicit goals of attachment approaches, which assume that the mother is used as a secure base for the development of independence, rather than the goal of development being to develop group dependence.

For Singer (1998), attachment theory is itself a pedagogy, in that it 'offers a culturally specific model for regulating behaviour and for internalising moral concepts' (p.68). In a strong critique of the model, she suggests that the goals of attachment theory have helped to facilitate a system of belief in Western culture, where mothers who mother sensitively are believed to be central to the proper development of their children. This approach, she argues, transmits a set of values that are, not only specific to a particular cultural context, but also specific to the developmental goals of the middle classes, which, she argues, may be vastly different from those of poor parents.

Despite these and many other reservations about attachment theory, it has had a wide influence beyond developmental psychology. It has been used as an explanation for various social issues, for example, domestic violence (for examples see, Allison et al. 2008; Babcock, Jacobson, Gottman and Yerington, 2000; Bowlby, 1984) and is the basis of many of the parenting books that are now available.

3.1.3 Attachment parenting

Whilst attachment theory was used as the basis for much parenting advice for the decades following the second world war, in more recent decades parenting advice has come from a similar, though not entirely different source. Ermann, Ponsford, Spence and Wright (2014) argue that, since the 1990s, there has been a growth in the popularity of parental advice books, which advocate 'attachment parenting'. They locate the source of this approach with a paediatrician, William Sears, MD, and his wife, Martha Sears, RN. (Sears and Sears, 1993), who are based in the United States. 'Attachment parenting' is positioned as a counter discourse to parenting practice by Sears and Sears. It encourages parents to pay attention to their own 'natural instincts' of care. Attending closely to the needs of babies from the moment they are born, is constructed as important for promoting 'attachment behaviours'. These include baby-wearing, bedding close to baby, and a belief in the signal of babies' cries (Spence and Wright, 2014).

Ermann et al. (2014) selected the Sears' books as the basis of a critical discourse analysis of parenting books, arguing that it is representative, and indeed a leading voice, in the growing contemporary discourse of 'attachment parenting'. They argue that the book is written using a discourse of benevolent paternalism, which is aimed at mothers and draws on evolutionary discourses about the naturalness of maternal care and caring.

There are a variety of debates about attachment style parenting. Liss and Erchull (2012), for example, explored feminists' accounts of attachment parenting and found two differing discourses. One set of discourses argued that mothering and attachment style mothering, in particular, was empowering for women. The other argued that the institution of

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motherhood is inherently patriarchal: positioning women as responsible for emotional labour and the reproduction of society. In either case, it remains that mothering and maternal care remain an important site of identity construction for many women with children.

3.1.4 Mothering in Ireland

A specific vision of motherhood in Ireland was constructed in the legislative framework of the state, following independence. In the 1937 constitution, which is still in force today, the role of women is clearly outlined:

In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved. The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home. The State pledges itself to guard with special care the institution of Marriage, on which the Family is founded, and to protect it against attack. (Constitution of Ireland, 1937, Article 41).

In this article of the Irish Constitution, 'woman' is immediately positioned 'within the home'. In addition, by making the transition to describing 'woman' as 'mother' in the very next sentence, the role is constructed as 'natural' and taken for granted. In this conceptualisation, a mother is also economically dependent on a man because of her 'duties in the home'. The 'labour' that women should not have to engage in due to economic necessity, is presumably paid work outside the home and not domestic or emotional labour.

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Radosh (2008) argues that discourses relating to the centrality of mothers developed long before the formation of the Irish Republic. She argues that this was a response to the famine of 1845-1852 and the need to manage the resources of the household and protect future generations. She suggests that, in post famine Ireland, mothers established domestic power which, in alliance with their priests, meant that they were responsible for moral codes, including those relating to sexual discipline. This management of reproduction was necessary to the wellbeing of families and communities to ensure that adequate resources (in terms of food and land to produce it on) were available to raise children to adulthood. Whether the regulation of food and sexual behaviour conferred actual social power on women is debatable. It would seem more likely, following the logic of Skeggs (1997), that this was an attempt by women to attain respectability and social value within existing social power structures.

Following the declaration of the Irish Republic, the maternal role constructed in the Constitution of Ireland, and the related legal and social policy that was enacted, ensured that Irish women were primarily defined in relation to their function as bearers and nurturers of children and as dependant spouses. Since the 1980s, there has been gradual social change supported by legislation. The ban on married women engaging in a range of occupations outside of the home ended in 1977. It became possible to obtain contraception legally on prescription from 1980 onwards and over the counter from 1992. The constitutional ban on divorce ended, following a referendum on the issue in 1995, which meant that people could leave a marriage and remarry legally after that date. Women now make up 46.3 % of the workforce (CSO Census, 2016). Such changes have

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allowed greater economic independence and control and limit fertility for some women. Fertility control was an important aspect of the change in women's access to lives outside of the home. Not only is this linked to the legalisation and greater availability of contraception, but as Hilliard (2004) has noted, the social pressure on women to have a baby every year is no longer in force. Abortion, however, remains illegal, except where the life of the woman (referred to as 'the mother' in Irish legislation and in the constitution) is in immediate danger.

3.1.5 Mothering identities

Motherhood is, not only ascribed as an identity in legislative contexts and in social policy, but has also been found to be an identity that is both assigned and taken up in ways that are important to social standing. Kaplan (1990) argues that once women cease to be single, the requirements of their identities change. Independent/sexual woman is subordinated to the wife/mother, who locates her sexual activity within marriage (Kaplan, 1990). Women in this context might be argued to have attained respectability. Skeggs (1997) argues that respectability is a discursive resource that informs the uptake of subject positions and that the performance of this kind of respectability involves the negotiation of class, heterosexuality, and care, as well as the protection and education of children.

As greater numbers of women have become active in the Irish workforce, expressed attitudes to financial dependence on husbands have also changed. A nationwide study of attitudes to family in Ireland (Fine-Davis, 2011) found that ninety per cent of the 1404 respondents agreed that 'it is good for a woman to be financially independent in a relationship'. The question about female financial independence was not asked in the

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previous survey in 1981. However, in the 2011 survey, fifty-two per cent agreed that 'being a wife and mother are the most fulfilling roles any woman could want'; a decrease from seventy-eight per cent in 1981 (Fine-Davis, 1988). This suggests that, despite an increase in women working outside the home, many people in Ireland still endorse ideals related to women being first and foremost wives and mothers. Indeed, seventy-nine per cent of the same sample agreed that 'men still want to give the kind of protection and support they have traditionally given to women' and half of the sample agreed that 'caring for children is best done by mothers'. The contradictions that arise in the responses to this questionnaire are not surprising. As I discussed in Chapter 2, discourses can be taken up and deployed in ways that are varied and sometimes contradictory. In addition, questionnaire research has been found to be a poor predictor of actual behaviour (Potter and Wetherell, 1987); these findings illustrate this nicely. However, they are also indicative of the kinds of discourses that circulate in Irish society and are endorsed in questionnaire-based research.

Motherhood remains a hugely important site of identity construction for many women. As an institution, it is accorded status and, as Liss and Erchull (2012) have argued, is taken up by some women as a source of fulfilment. On the other hand, according to Henderson, et al (2010) a mother is subjected to the gaze of other mothers and turns that gaze on herself and others. A good mother is respectable and takes her mothering seriously. Management of the self is essential to avoid the label of 'bad mother'. The good mother is chaste within marriage and also before it. She must, according to Weldon (1988), be a Madonna and never a whore.

3.2 Women and sexuality

The management and regulation of sexual desire and behaviour has long been identified as an important means of social control, as well as a central component in the formation of the self (Freud, 1930; Foucault, 1977). As Kaplan (1990) notes, sexual respectability is an important part of mother identities. Ferriter (2009) argues that, when the Irish state was formed one of the ways of creating an identity of Irishness was to stand in contrast to a lack of 'sexual morality' in Protestant England. By way of example, he offers an excerpt from a letter from one of the advisers to Archbishop McQuaid, who had an extremely powerful influence on Irish social policy, about the state of English morality facing Irish immigrants:

Public morals and conventions in Britain naturally depend for their standards on the degree of vitality animating the Church of England. [...] The absence of any religious incentive among the bulk of the population has brought many to a state which can only be described as pagan. (DDA McQuaid papers, 1943, in Ferriter, 2009 p 76).

Standards similar to those espoused by the middle classes in Victorian Britain, Ferriter (2009) argues, continued to dominate well into the 1980s in Ireland. The argument about a positioning of identities as self-consciously chaste and moral, has much in common with what Skeggs (2007) has argued, about the ways in which working class women make investments in respectability in order to counter 'middle class disgust'. She argues that working class women are subjected to a lack of respectability in ways that middle class women are not. As a post-colonial society forging new and separate identities from

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Englishness, it seems that Irishness, particularly Irish womanhood, was idealized as chaste and respectable.

Women's sexuality in an Irish context has been argued as having been constructed as a submissive and passive recipient of powerful male sexual urges (Inglis, 2005). Maintenance of this kind of sexual identity for Irish women, Inglis argues, is the result of various kinds of surveillance. Hilliard (2004), for example, documents talk about control and surveillance of women's reproduction and sexual activity in the latter part of the 20th century. She interviewed Irish women who first became mothers in the 1950 and 1960s. Her participants identified issues of power and control in relation to sexuality and reproduction much more closely with the Catholic Church, and its influence on social expectations, than with regulation by the state. The women in Hilliard's interviews discussed reproductive and sexual control in terms of initial unquestioning acceptance of the social expectations of the day. Hilliard's first set of interviews took place in 1975. At that time, contraception was not only unavailable, but was constructed as an option that did not exist because of social pressure and disapproval of 'family spacing' and limiting of marital pregnancies. Interviews conducted with the same women in 2000 identified gradual disillusionment with the Church, due to various sexual scandals. When the participants were interviewed in the second study, they argued that, as a result of this disillusionment with the Church, they had rejected the authority of the clergy to regulate sexuality. They also expressed anger about secrecy, silence, and control in the past. One specific scandal was mentioned by many of the participants in that study, as a turning point in their willingness to comply with Catholic teaching in relation to sexuality. It was the public scandal surrounding the publication of a

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book by an American divorcee, Annie Murphy (Murphy, 1994), about her affair with celebrity Bishop, Eamonn Casey, which resulted in the birth of a son, Peter, in 1979. Interestingly, the women in Hilliard's (2000) study did not reject the Catholic Church outright, just the authority it had held over their reproductive and sexual lives.

Ferriter (2009) has argued that towards the end of the 20th century, media influences from outside of Ireland and a loss of status and moral authority by the Catholic Church began to erode some of the boundaries in relation to the regulation of sexuality. Women interviewed by Murphy-Lawless et al. (2004) identified young Irish women as experiencing greater sexual freedoms than their mothers' generation. However, these women argued that permissive discourses, which constructed women as having sexual freedoms, were much more related to media fantasies, than to being actually free to have sex with whomever they chose. They also claimed that stigma about perceived promiscuity was a barrier to the use of contraception.

The permissive discourses referred to by the women in Murphy-Lawless et al.'s (2004) study have been identified as developing into 'raunch' culture by theorists in the United States (Levy, 2006; Paul, 2006), as well as in the United Kingdom (e.g. Bale, 2011). Raunch culture (Levy, 2006) describes a discourse that, Levy argues, is produced in the media and positions women as sexy and sexually available. In Levy's analysis, these discourses position women as sexual objects. She claims that they have led to 'a cartoonlike version of female sexuality' (Levy, 2005, p.5), which is not concerned with female sexual pleasure but rather with making women sexually available to men. Paul (2006) claims that what she calls 'the pornification' of culture has led to a generation of young women who are pressured into

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presenting themselves in ways which emulate strippers and porn stars. Both these theorists argue that such representations do not open up spaces for talk of female sexual enjoyment and fulfilment of sexual desires.

Stokes (2010) identified a growth in raunch culture, in Ireland. She suggests that positioning women as happily embracing sexual activity in this way, ultimately results in women seeking male approval for being sexually attractive, rather than as seeking their own pleasure. She further argues that raunch is an additional pressure on women to aspire to be sexually available outside of relationships (Stokes, 2010). It appears then, as Inglis and MacKeogh (2012) suggest, that Irish women are caught in a 'double bind' of contradictory discourses of, on the one hand, subservience, innocence, and constraints on sexual activity and, on the other hand, media portrayals of being sexually independent and available. Sexual independence is also not associated with motherhood (Kaplan, 1990) and this is a site of potential identity trouble (Wetherell, 2005) for single mothers.

3.3 Out of wedlock child bearing

The topic of single motherhood has its own relation to sexuality. Condemnation of women who have had children outside of marriage has taken a variety of forms, at different times in history. Single mothers have been variously regarded as wanton, feeble minded, and lacking in sexual morality, as well as a threat to the family, irresponsible, bad mothers, undeserving of welfare, and deliberately getting pregnant to obtain housing and benefits (Carabine, 2001). Though moral condemnation of single motherhood still remains, in recent decades stigmatisation has focused on teenage mothers and those who are welfare dependent (e.g. Mann and Roseneil, 1994; Hyde, 2000). Tyler (2008) describes media

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stereotypes as a vehicle for such condemnation, which, she argues, is rooted in 'middle class disgust' aimed at working class women (Skeggs, 2005). This stereotype, Tyler (2008) argues has been characterised in the UK as the 'Chav' stereotype.

The chav mum or pramface, with her hoop earrings, sports clothes, pony tail ('Croydon facelift') and gaggle of mixed race children, is the quintessential sexually excessive, single mother: an immoral, filthy, ignorant, vulgar, tasteless, working-class whore. This figure of chav mum circulates within a wide range of media, celebrity media, reality television, comedy programming on British television, consumer culture, print media, literature, news media, films, and 'chav hate' websites (Tyler, 2008, p.19)

Historically, Ireland's response to unmarried motherhood was managed in the context of a post-colonial identity project. Ferriter (2009) argues that the post-independence identity was one which was primarily focused on Roman Catholic, rural, agrarian people, living simple lives that were above all chaste and not corrupted by the 'laxity' of Protestant values in England. Women, in particular, were expected to maintain chastity as a matter of national pride. Women who were thought to be sexually immoral, as a result of breaching sexual norms, or who might have the potential to become sexually immoral, were regarded as a serious threat to the social order. Social censure of sexual behaviour, limited availability of contraception and absence of legal abortion, meant that out of wedlock childbearing was particularly problematic in Ireland. Guilbride (2004) goes so far as to argue that becoming pregnant outside of marriage in post-independence Ireland was perceived to be as serious as a criminal act because it disgraced the woman, her family, her community, and her nation. For these reasons, single motherhood was contained, stigmatised, silenced, and shamed in Irish society.

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A woman who was pregnant and unmarried could expect to be disowned by her family and her community. In some cases, women in these situations were committed to asylums (Kelly, 2008); others were institutionalised, or sent to mother and baby homes. As I discussed in Chapter 1, one notorious form of institutionalisation, was the Magdalene laundries. These were religious run residential institutions, where women participated in unpaid labour, sometimes on government contracts. Between 1922 and 1996, when the last of the Magdalene laundries closed, 30,000 women spent time in laundries in Ireland.

Another approach was for women to be housed in mother and baby homes, which were funded by the state and by donations from adoptive families of babies that were born in the homes. Women were brought to these institutions by family members and were admitted on the basis that they were 'fallen women'. In practice, Smith (2007) argues, this included women who were thought to be sexually active outside of marriage; prostitutes; incest victims; girls who were exiting Industrial Reform schools; or those who were deemed too pretty or too simple for their own good (Smith, 2007).

Inglis (2002) claims that throughout the 1980s and into the early 1990s, when institutionalisation became less common, single mothers continued to be stigmatised and certain cases that came to public notice were used as what he calls 'exemplars' to other women - a warning about how they might be treated if they became sexual transgressors. He demonstrates this claim with a case study of what became known in Ireland as 'the Kerry babies' case'. In 1984, a woman called Joanna Hayes, who was reputed to have attempted to conceal a second out of wedlock pregnancy, was arrested and charged with the murder of a baby that had been found washed up on a beach some distance along the

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Kerry coast from where she lived. A search of her family farm identified another baby, which she and her family claimed was the baby she had been carrying, and which had died shortly after birth. It had been wrapped in a plastic bag and buried nearby. Although the baby on the beach had a different blood type to, Joanna Hayes, Jerimiah Locke (her lover), and the child found on the farm, An Garda Síochána (the Irish police force) pressed charges against her for murder. They claimed that Joanna Hayes had given birth to twins, due to superfecundation: impregnation by more than one person as a result of intercourse with both during ovulation. The basis for this accusation was that, since she already had a child with a married man, Jerimiah Locke, and she was continuing a clandestine relationship with him, it was likely that she was having sexual intercourse with a variety of men. No evidence of Joanna Hayes having sexual partners other than Jerimiah Locke was presented. Following extensive public controversy, the charges were dropped. For Inglis (2002), the Kerry babies case illustrates a form of disciplinary power. Joanna Hayes he claims, was a scapegoat who was constituted as an 'exotic other', an 'exemplar' to other women about the consequences of sexual transgression.

Since 1984, when the Kerry babies case was in the news in Ireland, there have been changes in the incidence of out of wedlock parenting. As Figure 1 below shows, in 1980, of 70 000 recorded births in Ireland, less than 5000 were outside of marriage. By 2015, 24 000 of 40 000 recorded births were outside of marriage (C.S.O, 2017).

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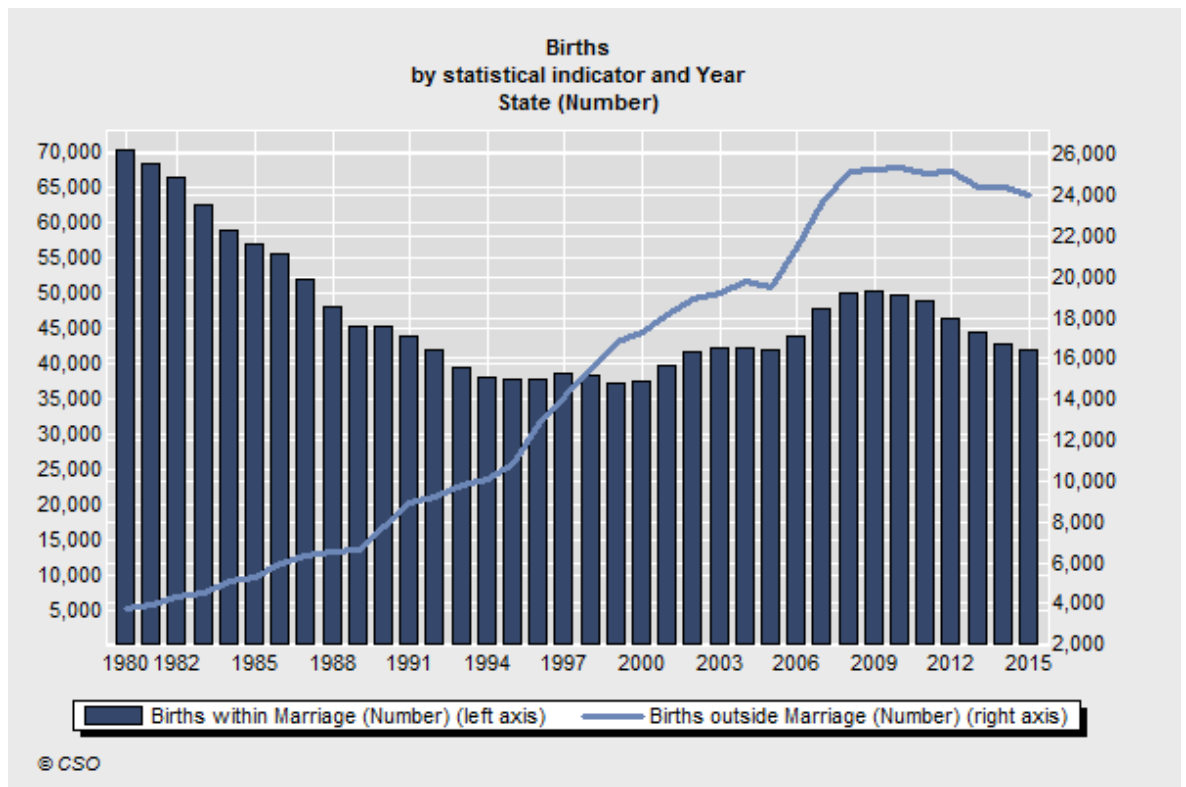


FIGURE 1 BIRTHS BY STATISTICAL INDICATOR AND YEAR

A substantial proportion of births in Ireland are now registered to cohabiting couples. Births to cohabiting couples have only been recorded in official statistics since 2007 and, as Table 1 illustrates, the number has increased. Of the 32.8% of births outside of marriage recorded in 2007, 51.5% were to cohabiting parents. This rose to 57.7% of the 36.3% of out of wedlock births in 2014 (C.S.O., 2017).

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TABLE 1 BIRTHS OUTSIDE OF MARRIAGE, INCLUDING WITH COHABITING PARENTS FROM 2007

Year	Births outside marriage	Births registered to parents at the same address	% of births registered to parents at the same address	Births outside marriage as a % of all births
2002	18815			31.1
2003	19313			31.4
2004	19938			32.3
2005	19528			32
2006	21295			33.2
2007	23170	11932	51.5	32.8
2008	24844	12859	51.8	33.1
2009	24532	13647	55.6	33
2010	24860	13498	54.3	33.7
2011	25190	13822	54.8	34
2012	25344	14321	56.5	35.1
2013	24353	13856	56.8	35.3
2014	24490	14127	57.7	36.3

These changes in patterns of single motherhood are reflected in opinion polls. A nationwide study on attitudes to family in Ireland (Fine-Davis, 2011) found that, whilst the vast majority of respondents (80%) agreed that marriage provides security and stability for children, the proportion who thought that people who want to have children should get married was 47%. These two somewhat differing responses to the question indicate, once again, the difficulties with questionnaire research, in which the variables for measurement are constructed by the research instrument. They also demonstrate that variable and contradictory positions are taken up in talk. In fact, over two thirds of the sample agreed that having a child with someone was a far greater commitment than getting married (Fine-Davis, 2011).

Smith (2007) argues that during the period of prosperity of the 'Celtic Tiger' in the 1990s, there was a growing popular discourse of 'Old Ireland', from which people attempt to

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distance themselves. Old Ireland represents an Ireland that was dominated by the church and is very different to the 'New Ireland' of today.

This discourse of Old and New Ireland, has been applied to the ways in which women were treated in Ireland in the past. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, following an investigation into the treatment of women in Magdalene Laundries (McAleese, 2013), the leader of Ireland, Enda Kenny, offered a public apology in the Irish Parliament on the 19th February 2013; the following is an extract from this apology:

I believe I speak for millions of Irish people all over the world when I say we put away these women because for too many years we put away our conscience. We swapped our personal scruples for a solid public apparatus that kept us in tune and in step with a sense of what was 'proper behaviour' or the 'appropriate view' according to a sort of moral code that was fostered at the time particularly in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. We lived with the damaging idea that what was desirable and acceptable in the eyes of the Church and the State was the same and interchangeable (Oireachtasdebates, 2013)

In this statement, the Taoiseach constructs a version of reasons for the treatment of women in Magdalene laundries. He locates a 'moral code' about 'proper behaviour' and an 'appropriate view' as one which is in opposition to 'our conscience' and 'personal scruples'. We the people, 'millions of Irish people all over the world' did this for 'too many years'. The 'damaging idea', he argues, is that what was 'desirable and acceptable in the eyes of the Church and the State was the same and interchangeable'. In doing so, he positions the Irish people as mistaken in accepting a 'solid public apparatus' that was based on Church teaching. In addition, he locates this firmly in the past, in 'the 1930s, 40s and

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50s', but prefaces this with the word 'particularly' to account for the continuance of these institutions until 1996. In doing so, he argues that Ireland is no longer like this and that the values of the Church no longer overrule our 'personal scruples'.

The suggestion of a complete and permanent change in the way in which single mothers are spoken about may be an oversimplification. There has certainly been a change in how single parent families are treated in relation to welfare payments. The introduction of what was then called the 'unmarried mothers allowance' in 1973 meant that women without an income who were parenting alone were guaranteed a welfare payment until their youngest child reached the age of 18. However, a significant change in these rules was implemented in 2015. This age limit was reduced to 7 from 2 July 2015 (CIC, 2016). According to media reports (e.g. Roche, 2015), Joan Burton, the government minister in charge of social welfare, implemented this change as an incentive for single mothers to work and thus exit poverty.

This certainly indicates a change from the model of mother who according to the Irish Constitution should not be 'forced by necessity' to neglect her 'duties in the home' (Constitution of Ireland, 1937). However, it does position single mothers, who are full time at home with their children and welfare dependant, as problematic. In addition, an exception to the payment for children until the age of 7 is made for single parents who lost a spouse to death. In this case, there is a two-year period of payment of the allowance, provided the child is under the age of 18.

3.4 Young single mothers

As has been discussed, a greater expressed acceptance of out of wedlock parenting has been noted in Ireland in the early part of the 21st century (Fine-Davis, 2011). However, several commentators have identified a shift in focus, from stigmatisation of single motherhood, to stigmatization of teenage mothers and those who are welfare dependent (e.g. Alldred & David, 2010; Cassiman, 2008; Duncan, 2007; Hyde, 2000; Mann and Roseneil, 1994). Teenage motherhood is represented as risky for both the mother and the child (McVarish, 2010) and as a social problem in need of a solution. Teenage mothers are regarded as, lacking the skills to parent adequately, prone to poverty, likely to repeat a cycle of teenage pregnancy, and as lacking in education and skills for themselves and educational ambition for their children (Duncan et al., 2010). The following quotation from UNICEF's 'A League Table of Teenage Births in Rich Nations' encapsulates many of the claims made about teenage mothers:

Giving birth as a teenager is believed to be bad for the young mother because the statistics suggest that she is more likely to drop out of school, to have no or low qualifications, to be unemployed or low-paid, to live in poor housing conditions, to suffer from depression, and to live on welfare. Similarly, the child of a teenage mother is more likely to live in poverty, to grow up without a father, to become a victim of neglect or abuse, to do less well at school, to become involved in crime, to abuse drugs and alcohol, and eventually to become a teenage parent and begin the cycle all over again. (UNICEF, 2001)

Phoenix (1991) argued, on the basis of her study of mothers under the age of 20 a quarter of a century ago in the UK, that the age of a mother as a marker of difference and deficiency

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in mothering was a relatively recent social construction. She points out that first time motherhood at older ages is the result of social and economic structures which require women to delay pregnancy and childbirth in order to become educated enough to participate in the workforce of advanced capitalist economies. McVarish and Billings (2010) argue that whilst some socio-economic similarities can be found across large populations, qualitative studies reveal vastly varied circumstances and multiple pathways to teenage motherhood. They also suggest that the problematization of pregnancy, purely on the basis of the mother's age, is a relatively new phenomenon, based on the assumption that young mothers lack emotional maturity, education, and financial resources required to parent; so, by definition, are harmful to the development of their children.

In relation to the specific claims made by the UNICEF statement, Duncan et al. (2010) claim that careful analysis of data offers evidence that teenage mothers, when compared with women of similar socio-economic circumstances, who do not become mothers, actually fare better over the long term in terms of education and employment. Duncan et. al. (2010) found that, contrary to common assumptions, the fathers of the children of young single mothers have a role in the children's lives and that teenage parents have high aspirations for their children. In addition, McNulty (2010) argues that there is a widely held assumption among health professionals that there is an inevitable cycle of teenage pregnancy in deprived areas. However, her qualitative study found no intergenerational transmission of a message encouraging teenage pregnancy. In addition, she found that in the accounts of the teenage mothers she spoke to, career aspirations were constructed as interrupted, rather than as absent. For the most part, unmarried teenagers are likely to live with their

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own parents (Jorgenson, 1993 cited in Bee and Boyd, 2002). In addition, analyses of developmental differences found between the children of teenage mothers and the children of mothers in their twenties, in the UK, have been found to be explainable purely in terms of the socio-economic circumstances of many of the women who become mothers whilst they were teenagers (Hawkes, 2010). In this study, Hawkes presented a statistical analysis of figures relating to teenage motherhood. She demonstrated that disadvantaged teenage motherhood in the United Kingdom was associated with disadvantaged circumstances prior to the birth of the children, rather than as a result of it and argued that it is the prior experiences that were the problem and not the teenage pregnancy itself. She further found that when life experiences were controlled for, there were very few further disadvantages. Furthermore, a study in the United States of America (Geronimus, 1997) found that women who had become teenage mothers did better in relation to income and employment, in their mid to late twenties, than miscarrying teenagers from the same background.

Burman (2008) has argued, that constructions of young mothers in public discourse supports a particular agenda in relation to social policy. It presents young single mothers as undesirable, and an irresponsible burden on society. This helps to maintain the position of women in society as deficient or deviant if they have children when they are young and single. Nevertheless, what some have referred to as a moral panic in relation to teenage motherhood (Kerry, 2007) has been prominent in discourse for a number of decades. This has been linked to discourses that present welfare recipients as lazy and sometimes dishonest. Cassiman (2008) discusses this construction in the talk of United States

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President Ronald Reagan's depiction of welfare queens driving welfare Cadillacs. Cassiman argues that the term 'welfare queen' was a powerful way of conjuring up moral panic in relation to poverty and to women. In this conception, young mothers were constructed as being of poor character, and morally questionable due to their unjustified reliance on welfare and 'refusal' to work (Cassiman, 2008). Welfare queens are part of a wider set of discourses that support neoliberal ideology; the ways in which neoliberal subjectivities (Rose, 1996) have been made available was discussed in Chapter 2. Neoliberal ideologies assume that markets are the best, fairest, and most efficient allocators of resources. Neoliberal subjects are oriented to the market first and foremost and to their participation in it. Those who fail to maximise their life circumstances by working and earning - those who live on welfare - are constructed as morally deficient because they demand support from the state. This allows the demonization of the poor and the socially excluded on the basis that they are not productive members of society. A productive person, in this conceptualisation, is a person who is middle class, educated, and able to participate in the world of work. This person is thus able to buy things for herself and her children and contribute to the economy. If the person is a mother, she must be able to work and earn as well as being a consumer (Alldred & David, 2010).

According to Thompson (2010), the ideal mother in popular culture is positioned as a consumer who either makes good or bad choices. In her analysis of movie representations of young single mothers, Thompson claims that women of colour, women who are deemed too poor, and women who are regarded as too young to raise a child adequately, are presented as making bad choices, whilst 'thirty-something' white middle class women

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maintain a legitimate claim to motherhood and its appropriate consumer choices, regardless of marital status. In her analysis of the movie, *Juno*, Thompson argues that the outcome of the story, in which the teenage mother, Juno, gives her child to a middle class, working, educated, white single mother constructs a happy outcome. Juno makes the 'right' choice by having her baby adopted by someone more suitable - a 'thirty-something', white, middle-class woman.

Indeed, Alldred and David (2010) go so far as to argue that the problematization of teenage mothers in social policy is a way of furthering neoliberal ideals of 'freedom' and 'independence'. Teenage mothers fail to live up to ideals of motherhood, according to this analysis, because they are welfare dependent, because they lack the skills to participate in the workforce, and because they do not have the money to be good consumers. They cannot be free because they are not participating fully in the market economy. Poverty and welfare dependence are, in this way, positioned as a personal failure.

In an Irish context, this neoliberal failure ideal has been compared with discourses of deserving and undeserving poor (Breen and Devereaux, 2003). Whilst some welfare recipients, like those who have lost a partner through death, might be regarded as deserving of financial support, others, like those who are constructed as getting pregnant either because of lack of responsibility or by design, in order to receive state supports and remain on welfare, are positioned as undeserving.

The idea that teenage welfare dependant motherhood is being embraced as a choice by many, is not supported by statistical data in Ireland. The percentage of teenage births reached a peak in 1999, with 6.2% (3,314) of all births being recorded to mothers under 20

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(C.S.O., 2016). However, as Figure 2 shows, the proportion of women under the age of 20 has become so low that it has failed to register as a proportion of all births in Ireland in 2012 and 2013.

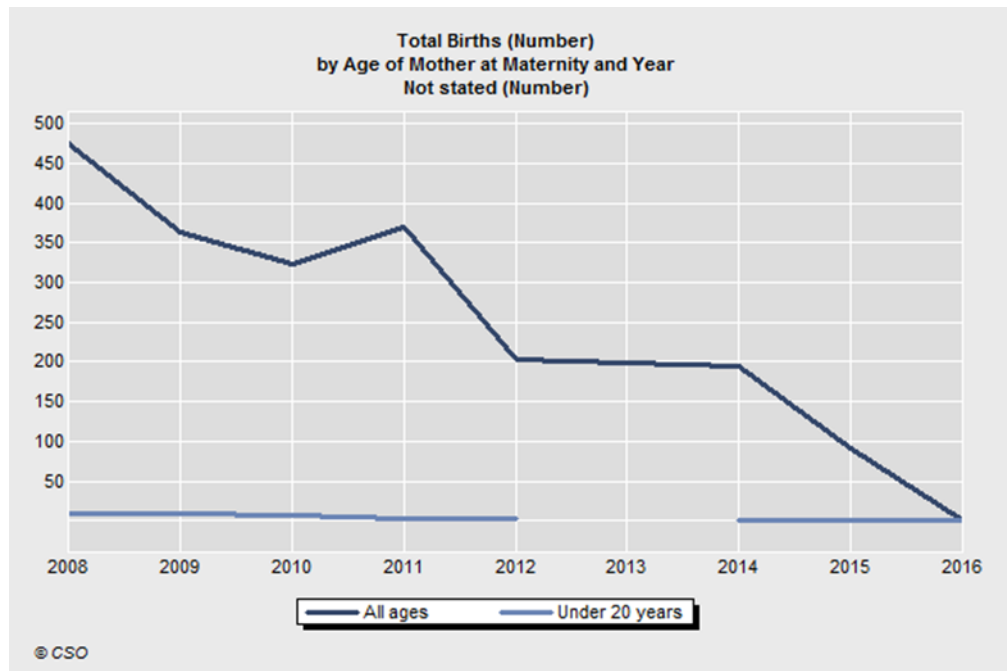


FIGURE 2 ALL BIRTHS AND BIRTHS TO WOMEN UNDER 20

The figures certainly indicate that teenage motherhood is no longer a widespread issue. According to Hyde (2000) in 1999, births to women under 20 were recorded at 6.2% of all births. The following year, Hyde (2000) published a study of young pregnant women attending a Dublin maternity hospital. She found that women who were, or appeared to be, young, unmarried and welfare dependent were subjected to stigmatisation in public encounters. Hyde interviewed mothers and found that they described incidents in which strangers stared at them and made negative comments about their ages and pregnancies. In explaining these findings, Hyde drew on Goffman's (1963) concept of 'civil inattention'.

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For Goffman, 'civil inattention' is when people who do not know each other act as though they do not see them and do not stare at them or talk to them in familiar ways. Hyde (2000) argues that the women in her study did not have the status to be treated with civil inattention because they were stigmatized on the basis of their perceived age and lack of a partner.

3.5 Chapter conclusions

This chapter has discussed motherhood and the construction of children as in need of particular kinds of care. Theories of attachment and parenting practices were reviewed and the impact of these on maternal roles were discussed. Some of the historical antecedents to the ways in which identities of mothers are elevated or problematized in particular and sometimes changing ways were examined. It has argued that all kinds of motherhood are subject to the 'gaze' of surveillance (Foucault, 1977) but that mother identities are largely, though not unproblematically, the result of self-surveillance and perhaps imagined surveillance by other mothers. The chapter then turned to the topic of women's sexuality and argued that women face, what Inglis and MacKeogh (2012) describe as, the 'double bind of sexual honour'.

The recent history of single motherhood in Ireland was discussed in relation to stigmatisation of all out of wedlock child bearing in recent decades. This kind of stigmatisation was largely related to problematization, on the basis of lack of chastity, which was of historical significance in the formation of appropriate Irish womanhood. It has been argued that Irish mothers, who were once confined to the home are now expected to be good neoliberal subjects who earn and support their children. However,

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being a good mother and a chaste woman is still an important source of respectable identities for women.

Out of wedlock child bearing, which until a few short decades ago could result in social stigmatization and incarceration, is now much more common than it once was. It has been argued the emphasis has shifted in recent decades, to 'moral panic' relating to an assumed increase in teenage pregnancy and the fear that young mothers are deviant because they are poor neoliberal subjects and are deficient in parenting skills and ambition for their children. The demands of respectable mothering, then, appear to have changed somewhat within the lifetimes of the women who participated in this study. Whilst mothers were once required to attend to duties in the home, a successful mother is now a provider with an education and a career.

In tracing a path through these ideas, it is clear that being a single mother and, in particular, a young single mother, signals identity trouble (Wetherell, 2005). A particularly troubled identity is that of the young single mother. The next chapter will examine the ways in which motherhood and single motherhood are situated within family relationships.

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Winnicott famously said: 'There is no such thing as an infant, meaning, of course, that whenever one finds an infant one finds maternal care, and without maternal care there would be no infant' (Winnicott, 1960 p. 587). The same might be said about a mother and child. Is there any such thing as a mother and child without family, networks, supports, relationships and interactions? This chapter will argue that family, in its various constructions, is an integral part of the lives of many single mothers and their children, though some single mothers do live without relationships with family.

The meaning of family is one which is contested in a variety of spheres, however. As Engelhardt (2007) notes:

If there is anything that characterizes the contemporary understanding of the family, it is the lack of a common understanding. We share no consensus.' Such debates occur not only in academic spheres, but also in political, social and economic domains of life, as defining who is in and who is out of a family has implications for eligibility for government benefits, immigration status, distribution of assets, and so on (p. 27).

Cook (2014) offers three main ways of defining family: those which define families in relation to statuses, such as biological relatedness or marital status or living arrangements; those which are based on the functions that are performed by the family in relation to society; and those that are defined by the personal meanings that are assigned to them.

In many of the moral panic discourses (Kerry, 2007) that were discussed in Chapter 1, single mothers are constructed as existing as a single unit, separate from other family members.

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However, single parents have been found to have close relationships with extended families (Jorgenson, 1993).

In other contexts, such as official statistics on households, the terms 'single parent family', 'lone mother', and 'parenting alone' are identified as a family form. And yet, as was discussed in previous chapters, the single parent family has been constructed, not only as a deficient family, but also as an incomplete family. However, in the context of statistics on households it is constructed as a family.

When categorising a single parent family as a family, questions arise about who is in such a family and how it is comprised. Is the function of a single parent family to raise children, and if so how well do single parents perform this function? The psychology text books, which were reviewed in Chapter 2, positioned family as a site of socialisation for children and were largely based on an assumption of the nuclear family as the ideal. Are extended families part of households and do relationships outside of the place of residence matter? Are unmarried fathers part of the family of the child of a single mother and of her family? Questions of this kind are not always easy to answer; however, it is worth asking them in order to think through the issues that arise when thinking about single mothers as members of families or as independent family units. As Cook (2014) notes, family is often categorised in terms of the meaning it has for those who are in it, so it is not a straightforward category.

This chapter will examine some historical and cultural variations in how families are formed and structured and then go on to outline some demographic features of Irish family life, both past and present. Theorisation, in relation to families as groups and the ways in which they interact, will be discussed, along with the ways in which family values have been found

to be transmitted across generations. The chapter will then go on to examine the ways in which fathers and fathering are talked about.

4.1 Constructing families

Changing forms of family organisation have been a source of debate, interest, concern and celebration by academics and social commentators alike. In 1916, the sociologist, E.W. Burgess, published a book in which he expressed his deep concern at the emergence of the nuclear family and the breakdown of traditional extended family bonds. He argued that the, then, newly emerging nuclear family was likely to be damaging to future generations of children in the United States. Without the benefit of extended family networks, he claimed, children would not be socialised properly and this would be damaging to society as a whole (Burgess, 1916). He later changed his view on this (Burgess, 1926) and argued that nuclear families in industrial societies were fulfilling different functions to those fulfilled by the large extended family networks of the past. The new forms of nuclear family, he argued, are based on love and companionship between the husband and wife, rather than on law and custom, as had previously been the case.

Elizabeth Bott made a similar claim on the basis of her study of urban English families in the 1950s (Bott, 1957). She identified two distinct kinds of marriage: those in which the husband and wife were part of close-knit networks of families and friends and received help and support from those networks; and those who relied on one another for support and companionship. This latter kind of marriage, she argued, developed as a result of geographical mobility, necessitated by changing work patterns.

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As well as historical differences in how families are structured, differences in forms of family organisation have also been identified across cultures. Nauck & Suckow (2006) conducted a study of family networks across cultures in Japan, Korea, China, Indonesia, Israel, Germany, and Turkey. They distinguish between marriages that are descendant and those which are affinal. Descendant marriages, they argue, are those that are based on the need to pass on inheritance, such as land or family farm businesses, whilst affinal are those which provide friendship and companionship.

In the latter half of the 20th century, some theorists began to express concern about the breakdown of the nuclear family. Popenoe (1993), for example, argues that the nuclear family is in decline and that this is damaging to the fabric of society because the family is essential for childrearing and companionship. In particular, he expresses concern about the lack of father figures and argues that this is detrimental to children's development (Popenoe, 1996). However, as the example from EW Burgess at the start of the chapter indicates, families have been constructed in ways other than the nuclear family in the past and continue to be constructed differently in many contexts. I have already discussed in this thesis, the many ways in which single parent families are constructed as deviant and deficient and have presented arguments to the contrary. In section 4.4 of this chapter, I will consider the issue of concern about the lack of father figures.

A more optimistic approach to changing family forms comes from Stacey (1996). As a result of her sociological investigations into California families, she concluded that, indeed, there is a change. Stacy's analysis constructs women as the drivers of family change. She offers case studies of the various family forms in which her research participants were involved

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and concludes that the ability to construct varying family groups across the lifespan meant that families would become more egalitarian over time. What is interesting about both Stacey's (1996) analysis, and Popenoe's (1996) concern about lack of father figures, is that family seems to be defined in relation to how women structure their living arrangements and relationships.

Bengston (2001) suggests that, with increasingly fluid bonds between people raising children, accompanied by better health and greater ages, multigenerational bonds are once again becoming important for wellbeing and support, across the lifespan.

These brief examples of commentary, about changing family forms, suggest that families have operated in different ways at different times, with different kinds of family form idealised in different contexts.

4.2 Families in Ireland

One of the ways in which family has been constructed is in relation to the economic organisation of the culture in which it appears (Whiting & Whiting, 1975). In the last 100 years, there has been substantial change in the ways in which the Irish economy functions. This is reflected in the comparison of occupational profiles. As Table 2 below shows, in 1911, almost half of the population (48.4%) worked in agriculture. By 2016, this had reduced to 4.9%, including fishing and forestry. The number of people engaged in manufacturing dropped from 26.8% to 12% and the number working in clerical and professional occupations more than quadrupled, from 8.8% to 40.3. The numbers working in personal service and childcare almost doubled, going from 10.4 to 20.5%.

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TABLE 2 COMPARISON OF OCCUPATIONAL PROFILES

1911	Percent	2011	percent
Agricultural	48.4	Fishing, Farming Forestry	4.9
Industrial	26.8	Manufacturing and building	12.8
Professional	8.8	Clerical, professional and technical health	40.3
Commercial	5.6	Sales, commerce, communications, warehouse, transport	21.5
Domestic	10.4	Personal service and childcare	20.5
Total	100		100

(Table from Williams, et al., 2016)

Kennedy (2001) argues that the kind of family forms that were supported by social policy at the formation of the Irish state, were those that supported the ascendant peasant and agrarian class following independence. As landowners and farmers, the special status of marriage in the Constitution was of economic importance, she claims. A ban on divorce, for example, avoided the division of farm lands following dissolution of marriage. Similarly, a lack of succession rights for children born outside of marriage until 1987, she argues, was imperative for farming families in order protect the inheritance of lands.

The importance of male succession in farming meant that children born outside of marriage were granted little legal status until the enactment of the Status of Children Act, 1987 (Kennedy, 2001). This development meant that succession rights were established for illegitimate children and that unmarried fathers could claim guardianship of their children.

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This is important in terms of the roles of fathers in families and I will discuss this further in section 4.4.

Another important change to family forms in Ireland was the introduction of divorce in 1995. This meant that people could legally end marriages and remarry, allowing legal recognition of second and subsequent families that was not possible in Ireland previously (Fahy, 2001). However, Ireland has the lowest rate of divorce in the European Union, at 0.6% per 1000 of population (C.S.O., 2016).

Other kinds of family have also acquired legal recognition in recent years. In 2015, the Children and Family Relationships Act was signed into law (Bacik and Brogan, 2016) and was designed to recognise 'non-traditional' families, including same sex couples and those who have had children through donor assisted human reproduction.

Social, legislative and economic changes have impacted substantially on family formation in Ireland, in particular since the 1980s. As shown in Table 1, births outside of marriage increased from around 5% in 1980 to 36.4% in 2015. This is a similar rate to that found in Germany, the UK, and Norway (Williams, et al. 2016). As Table 3 overleaf shows, a proportion of these children, 5.1%, live with cohabiting parents. The total number of children not living with married parents is 23.1%, indicating a decline in marriage as a prerequisite for parenting. It is also interesting to note that almost 1/3 of families (29.3%) have no children.

TABLE 3 HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION

Household structure	Percent
Husband and wife without children	22.2
Cohabiting couple without children	7.1
Husband and wife with children	47.4
Cohabiting couple with children	5.1
Lone mother with children	15.8
Lone father with children	2.5
Total %	100
Total family units (number)	1,179,210

(C.S.O., 2017)

There have also been changes in the numbers of children in families in recent decades. The average number of children born to Irish women has fallen from four per mother in 1970 to two since the 1990s (Fahy, 2001). In addition, far fewer women are full time at home. Figure 3 overleaf gives a graphical representation of the decline in the numbers of women working full time at home since 1997. In 1997, there were 580 women per thousand engaged in home duties. By 2016, this figure had fallen to 420 per thousand. Women, it appears, contrary to the aspirations in the Irish constitution, discussed in chapter 3, are engaging in labour outside of the home (Constitution of Ireland, 1937), and in increasing numbers.

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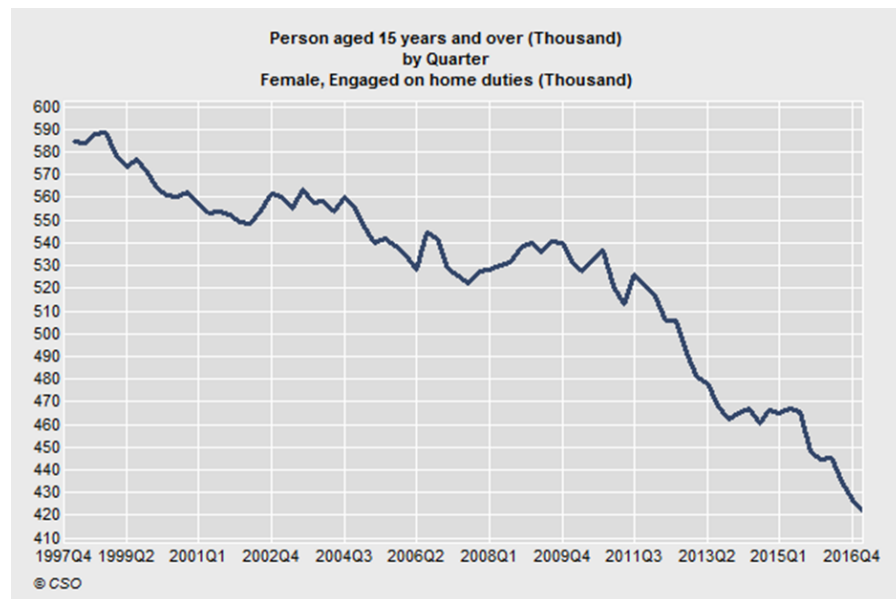


FIGURE 3 WOMEN WORKING FULL TIME IN THE HOME

The proportion of women in paid employment rose from 28.2% in 1971 to 47% in 2002 and by 2012 was at 55.2% of the workforce (OECD, 2013). The demographic picture in relation to families in Ireland, then, indicates a number of legislative changes and changes in patterns of employment and those who engage in it.

Families who do not work or who are in low paid work are at risk of poverty. The *Survey of Income and Living Conditions* in Ireland (SILC, 2015) found that families with one parent had a consistent rate of poverty, of 26.2%, in 2015. This was compared with consistent rates of poverty in two parent families, of 7.7%. In this survey, poverty was defined as incomes below €229 per week, per adult, and deprivation such as not being able to afford heating or new shoes.

Single parents are allocated a personal rate of €193 and a child dependant rate of €29.80 per child. This is a rate of €222 per week, below the threshold for poverty defined by the *Survey of Income and Living Conditions* (2015). A married couple with a child is paid a rate

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of €193 for the first adult and €128.10 for the second, also with a rate of €29.80 per child. People who are welfare dependant are also paid an allowance towards rent (D.S.P., 2017).

The reduced rate for the second adult, therefore, might potentially make couples better off financially if they live separately, particularly if they live with their own parents. By this reckoning, a couple with one child living apart would have a combined income of €415.80, whilst a cohabiting or married couple with one child would have an income of €350.90. In addition, if each of the partners is paid separately, each will have a level of financial independence. For those on welfare, then, and particularly for single mothers living with parents, marriage or cohabitation is not financially beneficial.

4.3 Roles and relationships in families

Another approach to understanding family is to examine the ways in which family members interact as a unit. Such analyses often take for granted a particular model or understanding of family, based on the nuclear family, which is constructed as ideal in contemporary Western society (e.g. Combrinck-Graham, 1985; Carter & McGoldrick, 1980; Jackson, 1957 - reprinted 1981). However, they do offer insights into how power is distributed in family units. Jackson (1957) was one of the first theorists to develop an account of the ways families operate as a bounded group of people collaborating together. Don Jackson was a psychiatrist who worked with families within which a member had mental health diagnoses; most frequently, schizophrenia. Having developed therapeutic interventions, which involved family members in the treatment of the individual with the diagnosis, he came to the conclusion that families are not a collection of individuals, but rather that family communication was a system of mutual action and interaction. He argued that

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there were tensions in family systems between change and the need to maintain the family as an operational unit. He used the analogy of homeostasis to describe this process and argued that patterns of interaction between family members were governed by rules, of which the family members were largely unaware. This approach underestimates the extent to which socially situated and gendered assumptions about social roles can structure patterns of interaction. I will discuss this further in the next section when I talk about constructions of fatherhood. However, the notion that interactions are a joint construction is a useful one for understanding how families interact and work up versions of themselves.

The ways in which families interact and the impact of those interactions on families have been examined using experimental research. Minuchin (1974) also regarded families as systems of communication between people who are negotiating positions from particular roles within the family. He was particularly interested in the emotional impact of family conflict. Minuchin designed experiments that measured stress hormones in children observing parental discord, and theorised that the level of stress experienced by the children was a result of the role that they played in family communication. What is useful about these approaches, is that they draw attention to the reciprocal and shared nature of family interactions and demonstrate that family members position one another, and are positioned in talk, in ways that are patterned and repeated.

Systemic theories, discussed so far, are useful for explaining interactive patterns and noting that families operate as systems. However, a limitation of these theories is that they show a rather static picture of family life, which does not account for change over time.

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In order to develop a theory that included the changing nature of family relationships, Carter and McGoldrick (1980) theorised a family lifecycle model. This model starts with a family as a system with its own roles and hierarchy, but also theorises that change in family communication is inevitable due to biological changes, such as aging and maturation, and also due to social and cultural expectations, transgenerational influence, and interactions outside of the immediate family. In addition, the fortunes of individual family members, Carter and McGoldrick (1980) argue, impact upon one another in relation to family beliefs and values and also the beliefs and values of the culture in which the family lives. For example, as I discussed in Chapter 1, Earner-Byrne (2008) notes that until the mid-1980s in Ireland, the perceived chastity of one woman in an Irish family was believed to impact on the marriage chances of other women in the family.

However, by naming stages and assuming a linear development of family life, Carter and McGoldrick's (1980) model does not account for some of the more diverse family forms that exist, in particular, in the context of this thesis, lone parent families. Another difficulty with family lifecycle models is the assumption that generations, who are not in the nuclear family, are outside of the family and are regarded as of lesser influence than the immediate family. Combrinick-Graham (1985) developed this aspect of the family life cycle by conceptualising it as a life spiral, with each family member moving closer to and further away from other family members, at different points of development. This is described by Combrinick-Graham (1985) as times when families are centripetal (close), such as becoming closer to parents upon the birth of a child, and centrifugal (separating), for example, when first getting to know a new life partner. The development of models for understanding the family is a complicated and, indeed, as the earlier part of the chapter

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noted, contested and situated endeavour. However, the work of theorists such as Combrinck-Graham (1985), Carter and McGoldrick (1980), Minuchin (1974), and Jackson (1957 - reprinted 1981) demonstrate the shifting nature of power relations within families and the ways in which social changes can also impact on power relations. Such models set out to examine some of the processes that maintain systems and manage change within an established family.

Another way in which families have been studied is by examining the ways in which intergenerational narratives operate within family interactions. A small number of studies (McLean and Breen, 2009; Fivush, et al., 2008; Wang and Leichtman, 2000) have analysed the stories that parents tell to children in order to identify the ways in which values are transmitted and how family identities are established and maintained. Fivush, et al. (2008) examined and compared the ways in which mothers and their children constructed narratives of emotional events. They found that frightening events were narrated with a greater number of emotional words than happy events and were more coherent and contained. They argued that, when mothers narrated frightening events, they provided causal explanations. The authors concluded that this is a way of scaffolding the meaning that the child attached to the event.

Studies in Taiwan and China have also found that storytelling to younger family members is utilised as a means of promoting moral and social values and cultural norms. Wang and Fivush, (2005) and Wang and Leichtman(2000) found that mothers, fathers, grandparents, and extended families tell stories to younger generations and that this storytelling constructs and maintains family identities. Such stories were found to provide ways for younger generations to make sense of personal experiences. They also form the structure

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of the kinds of narratives children begin to generate themselves. Similarly, McLean and Breen (2009) found that American parents tell stories which teach values to their adolescent offspring. Intergenerational studies have identified the ways in which the talk of families of women across generations tells stories of intergenerational care (Brannen, et al., 2004) and family work towards social mobility (Bjerrum Nielsen and Rudberg, 2000). Family support across generations was also identified by Gee and Rhodes (2003). They found that African American teenage mothers benefited from social support from their own mothers, but not from the fathers of their children. They also found that maternal grandmothers acted as substitute parents when fathers were absent, but also supported the return of an absent father and took a less involved role if fathers returned.

Participation in the everyday discourse of the family, following a change in circumstances, has also been found to make it possible for young women to renegotiate boundaries with parents, following the birth of an out of wedlock child (Hyde, 1999). Changes in family, then, allow for renegotiation of family relationships.

However, gender roles have also been found to be reproduced in family contexts. Discursive work on family roles has identified a number of ways in which gender roles are maintained and sustained, discursively. Dixon and Wetherell (2004), for example, found that couples divide tasks unequally but do not necessarily construct such differences as unfair and that this acceptance maintains and sustains traditional gender roles. In another study of gender roles in families, Nentwich (2008) found that mothers are often positioned as the main carer of children and take up subject positions of being selfless, whilst fathers take up positions as restorers of gender order and can be positioned as 'shirking' parental duties. Similarly, Sunderland (2000) found that fathers' relationships with their children

were constructed as being managed and facilitated by mothers. Nentwich (2008) also found that fathers were characterised as the mother's bumbling assistant, who needs to be guided by the more competent parent.

4.4 Unmarried fathers

As discussed Chapter 2, single parent families have been frequently constructed as deviant and deficient, when compared to what Shaffer (1996) described as an 'intact family'. A family of this kind is positioned as incomplete and there is often an assumption that the father of a child in a single parent family is not involved. Indeed, much of the 'moral panic' that is applied to certain kinds of young men who are positioned as dangerous and deviant, has been constructed as resulting from a lack of father figure in children's lives (Cohen, 1972). Furthermore, some single fathers are constructed as 'deadbeat dads' (Cassiman, 2008), who fail to support their children financially and who do not provide the kind of discipline and structure that children, particularly sons, need.

This kind of construction rests on the assumption that parents provide different roles in the lives of children. It assumes that men provide discipline, appropriate gender roles models, and financial support. There are two points that link to this. Firstly, as I noted in section 4.1, if couples are in receipt of welfare, they are collectively better off living apart. Secondly, young single fathers have been found to lack authority in the homes of the mothers of their children (Hyde, 1999).

If financial support and domestic authority are not available, then what other roles are available to fathers? As the previous sections discussed, fathers have been constructed as being required to do less domestic work than mothers (Dixon and Wetherell, 2004); as

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having their relationships managed by mothers (Nentwich, 2008); and as being less competent than mothers in caring for children (Sunderland, 2000). These studies together present a distant and undefined role for single fathers.

As I have discussed, in Ireland, historically, the fathers of children born out of wedlock, who did not marry the mother, had very little role in their children's lives, socially, because single mothers were often institutionalised and financially because they were not legally connected to or responsible for a child born out of wedlock until the enactment of the Status of Children Act, 1987 (Kennedy, 2001), which made unmarried fathers financially responsible for their children. This, however, did not give any legal right for a man to have access to his child unless he made an individual application through the courts. This legal situation changed recently with new legislation, which means that cohabiting fathers automatically become legal guardians with mothers (Treoir, 2017). This change was largely brought about as a result of lobbying by parent's rights groups (see for example, U.S.P.I, 2017). These groups argue for a need for social and emotional connection with their children, as well as providing financial support.

There is a dearth of research that investigates the relationships of non-resident single fathers and young single fathers with their children. Nixon, et al. (2012) found that children of fathers, who had been non-resident since early in their lives, described a lack of emotional closeness to fathers, in cases where the father was not responsible for caregiving, such as day to day dressing, feeding, etc. Nixon concludes that, in order to be close to a child, a father must spend some time living with and caring for them. The roles of bumbling assistant (Sunderland, 2000) and facilitation by mothers (Nentwich, 2008),

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then, may not be sufficient to provide a role for single fathers who are not resident with their children.

One of the difficulties in ascribing gendered roles to parents and assuming that children need different things from parents of different genders, is that there is scant evidence to back up this assumption. Biblarz and Stacey (2010) investigated the claim that children need both a mother and a father, by comparing outcomes for children in single sex couples, opposite sex couples, and single parent families. They found that same sex couples did not take on traditionally male or female roles when parenting. In addition, the lack of a male or female role model did not impact on children's psychological adjustment and social success. They did, however, find that children with two parents did better than children with one parent. Biblarz and Stacey (2010) argue that gendered parenting is not significant for children's well-being but that having two parents was better than having one. It appears, then, that having two parents is beneficial for children but that sharply gendered roles will not foster emotional closeness with fathers.

4.5 Chapter conclusions

This chapter began by asking the question of whether there is such a thing as a mother and child without family, networks, supports, relationships and interactions. It was argued that single mothers and their children are connected to families across generations. The chapter began with an account of the ways in which families have been constructed in different ways at different times in history, as well as a discussion of the varying ways in which sociologists have made sense of these changes. For Popenoe (1996), changing family forms were a cause for concern, particularly in relation to the assumed absence of father

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figures in the lives of the children of single mothers and the (also assumed) damage that this might cause to society. On the other hand, changing family structures were welcomed by other theorists because they were likely to be more egalitarian (Stacey, 1996) and more likely to promote intergenerational bonds (Bengston, 2001).

Changes in the ways in which families have been structured in Ireland were also discussed. It was noted that there have been substantial changes in the occupational activities of Irish people, with a resulting change in the kinds of family structure that were available. For example, between 1911 and 2011, those working in agriculture went from 48% to 4.9 % (a figure which included fisheries). In addition, a change, in the opposite direction, in the same time period, was that those engaged in clerical and professional services went from 8.8% of the population to 40.3%.

The ways in which family composition has changed in Ireland was also discussed. Decreases in the numbers of children born to families and increases in the levels of single mother and cohabiting households were also noted (C.S.O., 2016). This, together with a decrease in the number of women who identify themselves as 'engaged in home duties' (C.S.O., 2016) demonstrated a shift in, not only the composition of families, but also the kinds of work activities in which they were engaged. The chapter went on to discuss that single parent families have been found to have a consistent rate of poverty, of 22.6% (S.I.L.C, 2015). Payments to welfare recipients were discussed and it was argued that these provide a financial disincentive for single parents to marry.

Literature relating to the ways in which families interact as a group were reviewed. Family systems theories (Minuchin, 1974; Jackson, 1957 - reprinted 1981) highlight the

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collaborative and mutual nature of relationships in families, whilst family lifecycle (Carter and McGoldrick, 1980) and life spiral (Combrinck-Graham, 1985) noted that roles and relationships change over time. That chapter also discussed some intergenerational studies and presented evidence of the ways in which care (Brannen, et al., 2004) and social mobility (Bjerrum Nielsen & Rudberg, 2000) are managed across generations of women in families. Research into the ways in which narratives reproduce family values among generations of women in China (Nauck and Suckow, 2006) and how emotions are managed in talk (Fivush, et al., 2008) were also discussed. Research also shows the role of maternal grandmothers as substitutes for absent fathers (Gee and Rhodes, 2003).

Gendered roles within families were also discussed in this chapter. Evidence presented suggests that men are not required to do the same level of domestic work and childcare as women (Dixon and Wetherell, 2004); that their care and family work is managed by women (Nentwich, 2008) and that they are constructed as generally less competent than women (Sunderland, 2000). This demonstrates the ways in which gender is reproduced in families.

It is argued that this gender reproduction leaves little role for non-resident single fathers who are not providing financial support and who are guests in the homes of their children's grandparents (Hyde, 2000). Despite recent legislative changes, giving equal rights to single fathers, division of gender roles and assumptions about mothers being natural carers, could potentially mean that they are distant from their children. This gendered division of parenting roles has been found, despite the moral panics relating to the need for male discipline, to have little impact on social and emotional outcomes for children.

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The next chapter of the thesis will explain how the research was conducted. It will argue that an intergenerational family design was particularly useful for an examination of single motherhood in Ireland and will justify the use of interviews with families of women across generations.

Chapter 5. Collecting Talk

In this chapter, I will present an overview of the methods that were used to collect and analyse data for the research. I will begin with a recap of the methodological stance of the thesis that was discussed in chapter 2. This chapter will then go on to discuss the design of the study, the recruitment procedures that were used, and the decisions that were made in relation to who should be included or excluded from participation in the study. The chapter will give an account of the participants who took part, as well as the interview methods that were used. I then describe the ways in which I went about transcribing the interviews and the process I used to analyse them.

5.1 Methodological stance

A social constructionist perspective was the starting point for this research. From this ontological position, objective knowledge about the social world is fictional because it fails to acknowledge the ways in which knowledges are themselves constructed from available meanings and the methods that are used to produce evidence. As discussed in Chapter 2, Gergen (1999) suggests that dominant discourses within a culture have a powerful influence on the construction of knowledge. Epistemologically, then, the best route to understanding identities and interactions, is through attention to talk and the meanings that inhere within it, as well as to how these are mobilised to work up versions of selves and events. Chapter 3 reviewed some of the ways in which single mothers have been positioned in Irish society over the last 80 years. In order to understand how identities are constructed in the context of single motherhood, I wanted to find out how discourses were

taken up and how they were deployed by women who had been single mothers or had single mothers as family members. I also wanted to examine the ways in which talk was produced mutually within families and some of the ways in which this joint production was accomplished.

Of particular interest in this research, was the notion that certain kinds of identity are 'troubled' because they do not fit easily within the dominant discourse of how personhood should be done (Wetherell, 2005). 'Trouble' arises because of the intersections of different forms of identities, which do not cohere or accord with the ideals that are produced in social discourse; for instance, identities that do not 'fit' with the socially accepted way of being a woman or a mother, result in additional discursive work to negotiate the varying discourses that position the speakers.

5.2 Design of study

The study took an intergenerational approach to investigating single motherhood and set out to answer the following questions:

- What discourses did the women draw upon when talking about single motherhood?
- How were discourses mobilised and resisted?
- How were versions of family worked up in the interviews?
- How did the families collaborate in working up versions of events and themselves?
- What dilemmas and contradictions arose in the talk of the women?

5.2.1 Interviews for collecting data

There has been some debate amongst qualitative researchers about the use of naturalistic materials, in preference to interviews. This debate draws attention to the inherent drawbacks of generating talk, specifically for a research project, and argues that interview data can be constructed by the researcher in ways which may not reflect everyday talk but, rather, are a function of the interview setup. Potter and Hepburn (2005) recommend that, in preference to interviewing, sources such as recordings of naturally occurring conversations, personal diaries, records of interactions between clients and professionals, television programmes, and documents such as medical records might produce results that are a more natural reflection of how talk is deployed in social situations.

Whilst these kinds of naturalistic materials are indeed useful, interviewing was chosen as the most suitable way of obtaining data for a number of reasons. Interactions between professionals and clients, as well as professional notes, were rejected as a potential source of data because what tends to emerge from this kind of talk has a very specific footing. The talk is frequently mediated through the words of professionals and is structured in ways that are also patterned and regular and fit the needs of the professional setting. Whilst this would undoubtedly be an interesting study in its own right, and would allow for insights into how single mothers are positioned and position themselves when in contact with those in the helping professions, this was not the kind of data that I was interested in. Furthermore, in as much as interviews with me were structured to generate talk for my research project, interviews and meetings between single mothers, their families, and professionals would have had a very specific purpose. They also are constructions of their

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own kind. They would also not necessarily have produced talk about how single motherhood was constructed as an identity within a family setting.

Another kind of data that Potter and Hepburn (2005) suggest might be a useful form of naturalistic data is diary evidence. Again, had this been available, it might have yielded some interesting insights into how identities are negotiated. It would, however, have offered a static picture of incidents that occurred at some time in the past. In this study, I was interested in what Wetherell and Maybin (2000) describe as mutuality: the shared and collaborative nature of interactions. This was particularly important in the context of investigations into families. The choice of family research will be discussed further when I talk about choosing research participants in the next section.

Another source of data, which Potter and Hepburn (2005) suggest might provide a useful alternative to interviews, is materials for broadcast and film and television programmes. Certainly, these position single mothers in interesting and revealing ways. However, they are also constructed for specific purposes, which require them to be entertaining. As a consequence, they often involve informants whose circumstances are extreme or unusual. For my study, I was particularly interested in the ways in which women in family situations, which have not been marked out as particularly unusual, except for their connection to single motherhood, negotiate talk.

In addition, I was interested in how negotiations took place within family groups who spanned generations that have lived through a range of social, cultural, and economic change over the last number of decades. For these reasons, and because naturally occurring talk among family groups discussing single motherhood are not readily available,

I decided to use interviews as my method of investigation. As such, it was the method of data collection best suited to answering the research questions. Of course, the research questions were developed in order to follow the lines of investigation that I had identified as worthwhile, so in many ways this is a circular claim. However, the research questions were developed in response to an understanding, grounded in the literature, that single mothers are subject to different kinds of positioning, which draw on various sources past and present, that they are embedded in families and that they and their families negotiate identities, collaboratively.

5.2.2 Defining the participant pool

In choosing participants, the focus was specifically on women because female identities and sexualities have been regulated differently to those of men (Smith, 2008). Women have been stigmatised for lack of chastity in ways that men have not. The consequences of a lack of chastity or perceived lack of chastity included the potential for institutionalisation, as well as social exclusion and stigmatisation, which in turn leads to identity trouble in relation to single motherhood.

It is undeniably the case that men have a stake in the topic of single motherhood; they are, after all, fathers, brothers, sons, and partners of single parents. They may well have been subject to forced marriage (e.g. Goldscheider and Kaufman, 1996), social disapproval for illegitimacy, or have had a female relative who had a child outside of marriage. They may potentially have been either entirely excluded from the lives of children or pursued for maintenance or both. However, their positioning in relation to the topic is very different from that of women. Whilst men are also stake holders in the lives of young single mothers,

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and very much of interest in relation to aspects of the topic, interviews with fathers, brothers, and sons are beyond the scope of this research.

When deciding on who to interview, my focus was on family groups. Families are an important site of socialisation and of the management of women's sexuality. In an Irish context, Earner-Byrne (2008) has argued that, historically, in Ireland the behaviour of one woman was seen to impact on all women in the family. Her reputation and respectability and thus her future marriage prospects, could be irreparably damaged by association with a woman in the family who did not live up to the required standards of female chastity (Earner-Byrne, 2008). I wanted, therefore, to examine how women in a family negotiated the presence of young single motherhood together. Furthermore, as I mentioned earlier, the research design allowed for attention to be given to the ways in which family identities are constructed, mutually (Wetherell and Maybin, 2000) and collaboratively, within family talk, as well as the ways in which family narratives are developed (Fiese and Bickham, 2004). The shared and collaborative nature of interactions is particularly interesting in the context of troubled identities that impact on entire families.

The research used an intergenerational design. Three generations of women in each family were interviewed: a grandmother, a daughter, and a granddaughter. As McLeod and Thompson (2009) note, a 'turn towards time' in social research allows for an examination of the interrelation of the past and present and the ways in which people make sense of these in changing social circumstances. A design similar to those used by Brannen, et al. (2004) and Bjerrum Nielsen and Rudberg (2000) was used. These studies examined family cultures of intergenerational care, and change in intergenerational contexts, respectively,

and were discussed in Chapter 4. Interviewing intergenerational family groups made it possible to examine the ways in which responses to changing social circumstances were discussed.

5.3 Recruitment

Approval for data collection was sought and obtained from the Open University's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) (See Appendix C). The emotional safety and wellbeing of participants was considered to be of utmost importance throughout the research process. Participants were fully informed of the purpose of the study, the uses to which the interviews would be put, the steps that were and would be taken to protect their privacy, as well as their right to withdraw their data for a period following the interviews. (Information sheets and informed consent forms are contained in Appendix F and G).

Families participating in the interviews were required to consist of three generations: a grandmother, a daughter, and a granddaughter. Any one of the women needed to have been at some point in her life, pregnant, unmarried, and under the age of 20. The reason that I focused on young single motherhood in a research project about single motherhood more generally, was that, as was discussed in Chapter 3, this young single mother identity is particularly troubled. Women who had children adopted or who terminated pregnancies were beyond the scope of this study, as the focus was on maternal identities in the narrow sense of mothers who have given birth to and had raised or were in the process of raising children. Debates about who counts as a mother and what mothering is (see for example, O'Reilly, 2010) are undoubtedly worthy of consideration but were not helpful for selecting participants for this study.

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Recruitment was difficult and time consuming. As was discussed in Chapter 2, the concern of discursive psychology is not to recruit statistically representative samples from whom generalizable results can be obtained. Discursive psychology regards knowledge as constructed by talk that is recognisable within a particular context. It had also become difficult to find further families in the time available. I will discuss this further when I discuss refusals. I was, however, able to recruit until saturation was reached. In doing this, I followed Given's (2008) definition of saturation. She argues that saturation is met when themes and patterns in the data begin to repeat and when no further themes are likely to emerge as a result of further data collection. Saturation, she argues, is accomplished more quickly if a sample is cohesive; if participants have a relationship to the emerging theory and if the researcher has experience in the research field. My sample was cohesive in that the families were all Irish women. Although they did not have a relationship to the emerging theory, they did have a relationship with the research topic and I had a clear relationship with the research field. I will discuss the numbers of interviews that were conducted later in this chapter.

A number of considerations, both practical and ethical, were important in the design of recruitment materials. In the first instance, given the history of stigmatisation of single mothers in Ireland, I wanted to be very careful not to re-problematize a group who are already negotiating a troubled identity slot. I did not, therefore, recruit from care agencies offering support to young single mothers; women, who are engaged with social care services because they are young single mothers, are already positioned as 'in need of special support'. Vanessa May (2006) describes some research as 'studying the lives of lone mothers through a homogenising, totalising and (at times) oppressive category' (p.3) and I

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wanted to avoid this. Recruitment from care agencies would certainly have made practical sense because I teach in a college that has close relationships with social care agencies. The students that I teach are placed in social care organisations for two semesters of their undergraduate programme. However, I wanted to avoid interviewing people who were already 'under the care' of an organisation, in the context of that organisation, and I did not want to be positioned as the 'lecturer from the college' coming to investigate them. I did not exclude research participants who were engaged with social care organisations. In fact, I made no inquiry about such matters.

I chose to recruit by advertising on a variety of online media, such as Ireland based Facebook pages aimed at feminists and single parents, as well as web-based discussion fora for single parents (see Appendix D for example of recruitment post). I also recruited using emails to colleagues in other institutions around Ireland, snowball referral from previous participants, and word of mouth referral. I did not interview anyone who was a student on courses in the Institution in which I teach. However, I did accept referrals from students who knew people who might like to take part in the research.

When choosing terminology for the recruitment and information materials, I avoided the term 'unmarried mother'. This was the term that was most frequently used until the 1980s in Ireland and still appears from time to time. It is a term which has come to have negative associations (Houghton, 2004). When social welfare for one parent families was first introduced in Ireland in 1973 it was called the 'Unmarried Mother's Allowance' and was the sum of £8.50 per week. This term came to be used as an insult. For example, one campaigner for Catholic values in Ireland, who was very active in the 1980s, Úna Bean Mhic

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Mathúna, famously castigated ‘unmarried mothers getting mickey money’ (Fallon, McGrath and Murray, 2012). ‘Mickey’ in this context was a slang word for a penis. The insinuation was that those in receipt of Unmarried Mothers Allowance were akin to sex workers (another derided group).

In addition to avoiding the term ‘unmarried mother’, I also wanted to avoid the phrase ‘teenage mother’. As was discussed in Chapter 3, this is also a term that is laden with all kinds of often negative meaning. The term single can simply mean unmarried, but it is also possible that those who have a partner, even one who does not live with them, do not consider themselves single mothers. In considering phraseology, I also had to make my meaning clear and explicit so that people answering the call for participants knew if they were eligible to participate. I eventually settled on the phrases ‘pregnant, unmarried and under the age of 20’ and ‘young single mother’, which seemed to be as neutral as possible whilst still conveying enough meaning to ensure that participants understood what the criteria for inclusion were. In addition, the recruitment materials specified that the young single mother must have gone on to raise the child.

In the recruitment materials, I stated that my interest in the topic was due to my own experience of single motherhood. This identified me to potential participants as someone with a shared life event, rather than someone who might potentially be attempting to identify ‘what went wrong’ with participants.

5.3.1 Refusals

It was difficult to find families to participate in the research. There were a number of reasons for this. On a couple of occasions, one family member organised the interviews

but then later telephoned to say that one member of the family did not want to participate because the topic was too sensitive for them. On other occasions, it was difficult to find people who could all be in the same place for what was usually an entire morning or afternoon. Furthermore, as I discussed in Chapter 3, the numbers of women who have had children under the age of 20 has been steadily decreasing since a peak in 1999, when they were 6.2% of all births. By 2016, they were 1.9% of the total (C.S.O., 2016).

Although, as I have outlined, I gave a great deal of thought to the language used in recruitment materials and the ways in which participants were accessed, I still ran into a difficulty when recruiting. I posted a call for participants on a web-based forum aimed at single parents during the recruitment phase and received several comments and a private message asking why I had ignored single fathers. Some of these comments were robust in their criticism of me. I replied politely explaining that single fathers are indeed important but that this was not the topic of my research. It would appear that no matter how much thought is put into approaching potential research participants sensitively, it can be difficult to entirely avoid causing offence. In addition, I understood that men in this situation felt invisible and are not often asked for their views. However, it was unavoidable, given the focus of the research questions.

5.3.2 Participants

Seven families took part in the research. Table 4 shows the composition of the participants in the study. The seven women in what will be described as the 'Grandmother' category (though many of the women in the 'daughter' category were grandmothers too and some of the grandmothers were great grandmothers) were born between 1939 and 1955 and

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were aged between 57 and 73. This is quite a large age range, which overlaps with the ages of some of the people in the second generation. This means that the women are arranged in generation in relation to their own family rather than belonging to any particular age category. All had been married. One was widowed and one was married for the third time. One had eight children, two had seven, one had six, two had five, and one had two. Between them, they had 40 children.

The second generation of women, referred to as the 'daughter' category, were born between 1955 and 1978. This means that they were aged between 34 and 57 at the time of the interviews. Two had five children, one had four, two had three, one had two, and one had one child. Between them, they had 23 children. All had been at some point, married and two were divorced.

The 'Granddaughter' generation were born between 1978 and 1991 and ranged in age from 21 to 34, at the time of the interviews. One had three children, four had one child, and two had no children. Between them, they had 7 children. None had been married and one was engaged to be married. All but two of the women identified as Roman Catholic. The two who did not, listed their religious affiliation as none. Women who had a child whilst under the age of twenty are highlighted in bold.

The following table contains a full breakdown of the composition of the families who were interviewed:

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TABLE 4 BREAKDOWN OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Family 1				
Generation	<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Year of birth</i>	<i>Marital status</i>	<i>Number of Children</i>
Grandmother	Tiggy	1945	Married	7
Daughter	Julie	1965	Divorced	5
Granddaughter	Aoife	1989	Single	1
Family 2				
Generation	<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Year of birth</i>	<i>Marital status</i>	<i>Number of Children</i>
Grandmother	Mags	1940	Married	6
Daughter	Siobhan	1961	Married	5
Granddaughter	Tara	1989	Engaged	3
Family 3				
Generation	<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Year of birth</i>	<i>Marital status</i>	<i>Number of Children</i>
Grandmother	Annie	1955	Married	7
Daughter	Sheila	1978	Married	2
Granddaughter	Orla	1996	Single	1
Family 4				
Generation	<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Year of birth</i>	<i>Marital status</i>	<i>Number of Children</i>
Grandmother	Cait	1940	Married	8
Daughter	Marie	1965	Married	4
Granddaughter	Sarah	1996	Single	0
Family 5				
Generation	<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Year of birth</i>	<i>Marital status</i>	<i>Number of Children</i>
Grandmother	Nora	1939	Widowed	5
Daughter	Rosemary	1955	Married	2
Granddaughter	Jaqueline	1978	Single	1
Family 6				
Generation	<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Year of birth</i>	<i>Marital status</i>	<i>Number of Children</i>
Grandmother	Kate	1954	Divorced x2	5
Daughter	Erín	1976	Single	3
Granddaughter	Veronica	1990	Single	0
Family 7				
Generation	<i>Pseudonym</i>	<i>Year of birth</i>	<i>Marital status</i>	<i>Number of Children</i>
Grandmother	Hannah	1944	Married	2
Daughter	Beatrice	1964	Married	1
Granddaughter	Carly	1991	Single	1

My own profile as a participant in the research is as follows:

Researcher				
	<i>Name</i>	<i>Year of birth</i>	<i>Marital status</i>	<i>Number of Children</i>
	Lisa	1965	Divorced	2

5.3.3 Researcher as a participant

Potter and Hepburn (2005) identify the stake of the researcher as problematic when this stake is unacknowledged or made invisible in reporting the research. The personal history of the researcher is likely to affect, the topic, the questions that are asked, as well as the ways in which data are constructed and interpreted (Lazard and McAvoy, 2017). The question of, to whom the participants are speaking, is relevant and it influences the kind of arguments participants make about who they are. I became a single mother at the age of 22 in 1988. As I mentioned when I discussed the design of recruitment materials, this was identified as a reason for my interest in the research topic in recruitment materials.

As researcher, I was also a participant in the research. I was actively involved in the interactions that generated the talk and was also responsible for the footing on which the interviews were established. I will explore this topic further when I reflect on the research process in Chapter 9. Throughout the research process, I kept a diary of my observations and ideas. After each day of interviewing, I spent time making notes on aspects of the interviews that might be useful to the analysis; for example, how long the interviews took, if there had been a lot of activity in the house, as well as my preliminary observations about what was said in the interviews.

5.4 The interviews

As discussed in section 5.2 of this chapter, interviews were chosen in order to access talk of women in family groups. I wanted to make the interviews as informal as possible and access women from a variety of locations across the country. I travelled to various locations in the Republic of Ireland to interview families of women. The process of organising what turned out to be a day-long interview process in women's homes required some organisation and several telephone calls and discussions.

5.5.1 Planning the interviews

Interviews took place between March 2013 and July 2015. The procedure for organising the interviews varied. In each case, I was initially contacted by one member of a family group to say that their family would be interested in taking part. This was usually by email or Facebook message, though one woman did phone me directly. I discussed the procedure and the purpose of the study with the person who had contacted me and asked them to check with the other family members whether or not they would be interested in participating. I then posted out information sheets about the study and copies of the list of semi-structured interview schedules for all members of the family (see Appendix G and H for semi-structured interview schedules for family and individual interviews).

It was sometimes difficult to find the exact composition of family groups in which everyone was willing and able to participate. As Chapter 3 shows, teenage motherhood and pregnancy are much less common than stereotypes suggest. There were 1,187 (or 1.8% of total) births to mothers aged under 20 years in 2015. This represents a significant fall in the

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number of teenagers giving birth over a ten year period, when compared to 2005 when 2,427 (or 4.0% of total) babies were born to teenage mothers (CSO, 2017).

There was, therefore, a limited pool of women who were eligible to take part in the research. Furthermore, given the recent history of the topic, there were some people who did not want to participate. On three occasions, after an initial contact, the woman, who had originally volunteered, telephoned to say one of the family members had changed their mind and did not want participate.

Families were recruited until such time as patterns in the talk began to repeat. Before the interviews started, I read the information sheet aloud and answered any questions the participants had. I then asked the women to sign consent forms and choose a pseudonym to be used in the research (see Appendix I). Pseudonyms were selected to identify participants, in preference to numbers or letters, so that the resulting transcripts would be easier to read. Taylor (2012) has argued that pseudonyms carry particular implications; of race or class, for example. Because of this I asked participants to choose their own pseudonyms, rather than impose my own choice of name on their words. This did not address the core issue of the reinforcement of categorisation that Taylor (2012) identifies, but the categorisation was done by the participants and not by me.

In all, seven families were interviewed, both as family groups and individually, except in the case of the pilot, in which the grandmother was not interviewed alone. Before the pilot, I had intended to interview only those women who identified as having been at some point in their lives, pregnant, unmarried, and under the age of 20. However, following the pilot interview, I decided to do follow up interviews with all the family members because it

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seemed that even those who had not identified as having been young, pregnant, and unmarried, had things to say that they might not say in the family interviews, which might be interesting and relevant to the interview questions.

In all cases, each set of interviews (the two group and the individual interviews) took place on the same day. Families were interviewed as family groups of three. Interviews were structured in two halves, with a break part way through for reasons that I will discuss below. Each woman was then interviewed individually in another room, away from the rest of the family. The individual interview was conducted, in order to ensure that each woman had an opportunity to renegotiate or elaborate on any of the topics that arose in the family interviews.

The family interviews took place at the kitchen table in the home of the family member who had volunteered to host. The generation of the woman hosting the interview varied, but in all cases the family interview was conducted at the kitchen table. Speer (2002) argues that any distinction between 'natural' and 'contrived' data overlooks that all conversations have a setting of some kind. The setting of these interviews was ethnographic in style (Jordan, 2006), meaning that they took place in the environment in which the participants usually interact and were informal in style. It was assumed that kitchen table talk was similar to that which takes place in family settings on other days, when participants are not being interviewed for a research project. I took along a cake or an apple tart to each home in order to establish this informal setting. Parents and grandparents have been found to tell stories about their own lives and childhoods to younger generations when families gather (Fiese, et al., 1995; Fiese and Bickham, 2004).

As was discussed in Chapter 4, this has been identified as a primary means of narrating gendered identities to sons and daughters (Buckner and Fivush, 2000). Tea was made by the woman who was hosting and I began the interviews by saying that I would use prompts from the interview schedules but that we were 'just women at the kitchen table having a chat'.

5.5.2 Compiling questions

It is inevitable that social science agendas are grounded in literature because the researcher needs to be familiar with the field in order to justify doing the research in light of previous research. However, it is also important that the questions be sufficiently open to allow participants to develop their own negotiations of the issues and see how these relate to the literature. The complex and varying footings of the researcher and the researched are of particular relevance in the context of this research, since by asking about being a young single mother, I am positioning participants as single mothers. However, because the critical discursive psychological approach is being used, it was hoped that a space would be created for resisting this category.

Questions were developed in response to recent research findings on the topics of single motherhood, young single motherhood, and female sexuality. The opening question - "what does the term 'single mother' mean to you?" - was designed to set the topic for the interview and questions lead up to the topic of sexuality. In order to approach the topic gently, this topic was approached last, as it has been found to be little talked about in families in Ireland (Hyde and Howlett, 2004).

5.5.3 Interview structure

Potter and Wetherell (1995) argue that a challenging style of interview can provide data that is rich and analytically revealing. However, as the previous sub-section discussed, this might be less useful in a situation where participants are people whose identities have been troubled by a long history of stigmatisation. In this view, the participants are already subject to challenges from the discourses that could be applied to them or that are already in circulation. The style of interviewing that I chose was one which drew on my training as a counsellor. The questions were open and broad and I encouraged the participants to do as much of the talking as possible. I tried, where possible, to avoid interrupting the conversational flow, particularly in the first half of the group interview.

The family interviews adapted a method from biographic narrative interviewing (Wengraf, 2001), which splits the interview into two halves. The first half of the interview was guided by semi-structured interview questions and recorded. During this part of the interview, I jotted down any points that seemed interesting for follow up in the second half. This design allowed any interaction between the participants to proceed with a minimum amount of direction or interruption from me, whilst allowing me to follow up on things that arose in the first half that I identified as particularly worthy of further elaboration during the second part of the interview. After the first group interview, a short break was taken. This allowed the women time to marshal further discursive resources in their exploration of the topics and allowed me to elaborate on topics from the first interview in the second. In the event, this was the time when more tea was made. At some points, the talk went to other topics and in others it continued over the break.

Individual interviews were conducted with each woman in private, following the group interviews. This gave each woman the opportunity to renegotiate with me, anything that arose in the group that she wanted to argue against, with an opportunity to tell her own story in her own way.

5.6 Transcribing and analysing the data

Data analysis in qualitative methodological traditions is open to the accusation that the analysis might have more to say about the orientation of the researcher than about the meaning that is constructed in the talk between the interviewer and the participants (Potter and Hepburn, 2005). To avoid this accusation, data analysis needs to be shown to be as transparent as possible (though this can be difficult) and the claims that are made for the data need to be warranted by reference to it. This subsection gives an overview of the procedures that were used for transcription and for the analysis.

5.6.1 Transcription and notation

In total, 24 interviews were conducted: parts A and B with each family and an individual interview with each woman but the grandmother in the pilot. As discussed earlier in this chapter, the procedure was changed following the pilot interviews. Interviews were digitally recorded. The recordings were stored in a Dropbox folder, to which only I have access, and were saved in password protected folders. Interviews were transcribed for ease of analysis and stored in files in the same folder. I transcribed the interviews myself using an adaptation of the transcription conventions used by Jefferson (1983). Hollway (2005) argues that, since a transcription can never be a true representation of talk, it is better to attend to the meaning of the talk than to, to use her words, 'fetishize words and symbols

captured in writing' (p. 2). The transcriptions therefore included only what was necessary to make them a useful representation of the talk that could be understood.

I transcribed the interviews in full, using (.) for untimed pauses and [...] to insert additional information or for anonymization purposes, for example, when the name of a place was mentioned. Punctuation, such as question marks, exclamation marks, and capital letters, was omitted, except when people used proper nouns. In addition, speech marks were used for reported speech.

Transcriptions followed orthographic conventions, with standard spellings of words, for ease of understanding. Contractions and additional filler words, such as 'em' and 'ahh' were included for a clear representation of the interviews. In addition, hesitations using words like 'em' and 'mmm' were included for a faithful representation of the talk. Line numbers were added to transcriptions for ease of analysis.

Because the research questions were about meaning and collaboration; and because the analysis was done using repeated listening to the recordings of the interviews, I did not require the fine grained transcription, identifying aspirations, overlaps, softness of tone etc., as is the convention in conversation analytic work.

5.6.2 Analysing the data

In order to analyse the data, I repeatedly played the recordings of the interviews and made notes on copies of transcripts. The analysis involved moving back and forth between the notes that I made on the transcripts and referring to the notes that I kept in my research diary, as well as listening to recordings at various points to check that the transcript was reflecting what was said. My analysis was organised so that it could focus on the research

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questions that were posed at the outset. In analysing the talk, I identified patterns across the data, rather than attempting to find differences between different speakers. The focus was on shared discursive resources that repeated across the data. This aspect of the analysis was followed by an examination of what the women did with the talk and how they negotiated it. I looked, for example, at the ways in which women talked about mothers and motherhood, as well as the subject positions they took up. I also noted ways in which subject positions were resisted and how any resistance was managed.

The analysis then went on to examine how families were constructed in the talk. This involved an examination of how interpersonal relationships were narrated and the stories that were told about family interactions. I also looked for patterns in the ways in which the participants interacted in the interviews. I was very aware, during this part of the analysis, that I was also a participant in the process. For this reason, I identified my own role in the construction of the conversations. I return to this aspect of the research in Chapter 9 of the thesis,

These data analysis processes were not as linear as is explained here. The process was iterative, going back and forth between recordings, and transcripts, identifying different themes and discursive strategies and categorising them in different ways to see if this made different patterns across the data. It also involved experimenting with different analytic tools and thinking through alternative interpretations from the ones that I identified on first or second reading. In addition, I went back to the recordings of the interviews and listened to them whilst reading sections of marked-up script to check that the script was representing the talk in the way that I was reading it.

5.6.3 Analytical tools

Analysis was informed by the approach of critical discursive psychology (Wetherell, 2005). Willig (2001) argues that discourse analysts regard any reading of data as one of many possible interpretations of the data. However, I have attempted to warrant my claims for the data by demonstrating how the analysis was arrived at in the empirical chapters. A number of analytic concepts were particularly useful in examining how the talk was mobilised and these are explained in section 5.6.2.

The concepts that I discussed in Chapter 2 informed the analysis. Harré (2003) distinguishes between discourse, as the use of language that has been institutionalised, and discursive practice as the use of talk in action. I analysed the data in a number of ways and tried out different ways of grouping the talk. In the first instance, I sorted sections of talk to correspond with the research question. This involved using multiple copies of the interview transcripts and at times allocating the same sections of interviews to different questions. So, for example, a family could be presenting a version of the kind of family that they were at the same time as using particular ways of talking about young single motherhood.

The second phase of the analysis focused on the action orientation of the talk. The analysis was attentive to the ways in which subject positions (Davis and Harré, 1990) are taken up in talk, producing various kinds of identities at different times in interactions. In addition, interpretative repertoires (Wetherell, 1998), culturally available ways of talking, were identified in the talk of the women. Another aspect of the analysis, which related to the final research question, was the identification of ideological dilemmas (Billig, 1988), the contradictions that arise in the ways in which people argue versions of the selves, show

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how talk is utilised to construct identities. I paid attention to the ways in which narratives were constructed and the ways in which stories were told. Billig's (1991) concept of discursive repression also informed the analysis.

When I analysed the ways in which families collaborated together in talk, I also considered the usefulness of concepts from conversation analytically informed work, though not in relation to fine grained analysis of the orientation of the talk. At times, this meant returning to the literature in order to see if the patterns I had noticed had been identified elsewhere. For example, the concept of dilemma of stake, in which an assumed vested interest by the speaker is managed by acknowledgement of that interest (Edwards and Potter, 2005), was useful in examining the talk. The analysis, then, examined the discourses that the women used about single motherhood, the ways in which they told stories, the ways in which discourses were mobilised and resisted, the versions of family that were worked up in the interviews, and the ways in which dilemmas and contradictions were managed. It also examined the ways in which families collaborated to work together to produce meanings with me, by analysing some of ways in which families collaborated to produce narratives.

5.7 Conclusions

In this chapter, I briefly revisited the methodological stance that was argued in Chapter 2. I outlined the design of the study and argued that interviews with Irish women across three generations provided the most useful form of data collection for this study. It was argued that interviews provided the most useful way of interrogating the research questions. The chapter went on to outline and justify the decisions that were made in relation to recruitment and give an overview of the interview methods that were used. I then outlined

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the transcription and analysis procedures and provided a recap of some of the more important analytic concepts that informed the analysis.

The following three chapters will present the results of the analysis. As was discussed in this chapter, a discourse analysis is regarded as one reading of the data. Because of the situated and constructed nature of knowledge, the aim is not, as might be the case in experimental research, for example, to attempt to present findings as “unbiased” facts that were waiting to be discovered. Rather, the analysis relies on what Henwood and Pigeon (1995) describe as generativity and rhetorical power: the extent to which the findings pose further possibilities for future research and the effectiveness and rhetorical power of the argument. The empirical chapters are organised around the research questions. The first two questions, which ask which discourses about single motherhood the women drew on and how they mobilised them will be addressed in Chapter 6. The versions of family that the women worked up will be presented in Chapter 7; and the ways in which the families collaborated in talk will be presented in Chapter 8.

Chapter 6. Discourses of Single Motherhood

This research project is about the varied meanings of single motherhood in Ireland. For this reason, it seems fitting to open this chapter with an exploration of some of the ways in which the participants in the research constructed single motherhood. This chapter is primarily focused on the answers to the first two research questions:

- What discourses did the women draw upon when talking about single motherhood?
- How were discourses mobilised and resisted?

It also identifies some of the ideological dilemmas that arose in the talk, so it presents some answers to the final research question:

- What dilemmas and contradictions arose in the talk of the women?

Chapter 2 argued for a model of the person in which identities are taken up and negotiated using available discursive resources in a particular culture and time. Davies and Harré (2003) distinguish between discourse, as the use of language that has been institutionalised, and discursive practice as the use of discourse to produce identities.

As Billig (1998) argues, thinking is a process that draws on ideology and repeats assumptions, which maintain existing power relations by presenting them as common sense. This chapter presents some excerpts from the talk, which illustrate the discourses that were taken up by the women and the ways in which they were mobilised, as well as

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some of the ideological dilemmas that arose when they did this. These ideological dilemmas point up some of the trouble that arises when single mothers and their families talk about single motherhood.

This first section of the chapter will present examples of three distinctive discourses that the women used when they talked about single motherhood. I am identifying these as: *the sexually stigmatised woman*, *the neoliberal failure*, and *the mother like any other*. The chapter will go on to examine how the women negotiate each of these discourses and argue that the content of the discourses is not challenged. There is no resistance to the idea that women *should* be sexually stigmatised; there is no contestation of the negative stereotypes relating to the neoliberal failure; and there is no challenge to the notion that mothers should be self-sacrificing, dedicated to the wellbeing of their children, and consumed by motherhood identities. Rather, the women negotiate these discourses in ways that allow them to present versions of themselves as ‘respectable’ (Skeggs, 1997).

When presenting extracts from the interviews, each extract is given a number. This is followed by the number of the family (families have been numbered 1-7). If the extract is from one of the individual interviews, the generation of the family that the woman was in is listed. Grandmothers are labelled with G, Daughters (from the middle generation) with D, and granddaughters with Gd. For example, the first extract is from lines 6-8 of the individual interview with family 2 and is the daughter speaking and is labelled: **Extract 1 (f2D 6-8)**. If the extract is from a family interview, the generation is not specified (though I will identify who the participants are before presenting the extract). Instead, the extract number will be followed by the family number and then, either Group A for the first family interview, or Group B, for the second; for example, **Extract 2 (f1 Group A, 78-86)**.

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I have identified myself as Lisa and each of the women by the pseudonyms they chose.

In this first extract, Siobhan, the daughter in family two, who was pregnant and unmarried when she was eighteen, is talking to me in the individual interview that I did with her.

Extract 1 (f2D 6-8)

- 1 **Lisa:** so (.) tell me first of all about (.) you were talking earlier on (.) about
2 whether or not yknow women were afraid of being pregnant (.) when you
3 were young (.) what was that like
- 4 **Siobhan:** you would have been the fear (.) and I suppose and the fear of (.) I think
5 most of it would have been that you were a Jezebel if you were out and
6 having sex or whatever

This example from Siobhan, illustrates the first of the discourses about single mothers, which I am calling *the sexually stigmatised woman*. Siobhan identifies ‘the fear’ (line 1) in relation to how she might be judged by unnamed others. She uses a biblical trope ‘you were a Jezebel’ (line 5). The use of the metaphor of the biblical character, Jezebel, a symbol for sexually stigmatised womanhood, can be identified with the religious inspired ‘fallen women’ discourses, discussed in Chapter 3. In drawing on this metaphor, Siobhan highlights one aspect of the trouble (Wetherell, 2005) that she argues was associated with out of wedlock sexual behaviour, ‘if you were out having sex’ (line 5).

The next extract is from Julie, the daughter in Family 1. I had asked the group about the meaning of single motherhood.

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Extract 2 (f1 Group A, 78-86)

- 1 **Lisa:** the term single mother (.) when you hear people talk about single
2 mothers (.) what does that mean for you
- 3 **Julie:** it depends on what (.) it depends on the context (.) really (.) when you're
4 talking about it (.) I mean you know some people (.) just saying (.) looking
5 down their noses (.) that some people just get pregnant now for the
6 money (.) for the lone parents (.) the dole (.) that they don't want to go
7 out and work (.) but it wasn't like that in my case (.) I always wanted to
8 work (.) but some people can be very ignorant about it (.) dya know (.)
9 other people are fine

In this extract, Julie identifies unknown 'Some people' (line 4) 'looking down their noses' (lines 4, 5) at other unidentified 'some people' (line 5). These people characterise single mothers as having 'just get pregnant now for the money (.) for the lone parents (.) the dole' and who also 'don't want to go out and work' (lines 5, 6). This is very much in line with the literature that was reviewed in Chapter 3. These interpretative repertoires conjure up images of the 'welfare queen', the name given by United States President Ronald Reagan to a group of single women who he claimed were living lavish lives on welfare because 'they don't want to go out and work' (lines 6, 7). I have identified this discourse as '*the failed neoliberal subject*', who as Alldred and David (2010) argue, are constructed as having given up the ideals of freedom and independence, and have failed to live up to appropriate expectations for women.

A third distinctive way in which single mothers were talked about was in relation to their role as mothers. I am describing this discourse as '*the good mother like any other*.' In using the phrase, 'like any other', I am arguing that, by taking up this position, the women are

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accomplishing identities that are available to all mothers, regardless of their sexual 'standing' or financial status.

The following extract from Carly, the granddaughter in Family 7, illustrates a way in which the women mobilised the discourse of *the good mother like any other*. As in the previous extract, I had asked the group about the meaning of single motherhood

Extract 3 (f7 Group A GD 6-13)

- | | | |
|---|---------------|--|
| 1 | Carly: | I don't know (.) I think a lot of people think it's just a mother who is literally |
| 2 | | by herself (.) but I consider myself a single mother even though his dad is |
| 3 | | involved (.) because I have him (.) I'm his sole carer and his sole provider |
| 4 | | (.) I provide him with everything he needs (.) shoes (.) clothes (.) crèche (.) |
| 5 | | I go to work and his dad is involved and he takes him twice a week but I |
| 6 | | think I'm a single parent (.) like (.) you know (.) I'd consider myself one (.) |
| 7 | | but I think a lot of people think you're not a single parent unless your child |
| 8 | | doesn't see his father or doesn't see his mother |

Whilst taking up the subject position of single mother, 'I consider myself a single mother' (line 2), 'I'm his sole carer' (line 3) but also a good neoliberal subject who works (line 5), she also 'provides him with everything he needs' (lines 3, 4), as well as facilitating a relationship between her child and his father (line 5). In this talk, she is actively resisting the lack of respectability that caused the participants in Hyde's (2000) study to be stigmatised in public encounters. Although this might be read as a discourse of independence and competence, Carly is also demonstrating that she is doing all that is needed for her child. She works, she provides, and she ensures that the child's father is

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involved and is therefore not the kind of irresponsible mother who does not give her child access to a father and who is welfare dependant.

Having offered examples of the three discourses that were identified, the chapter will go on to explore each of them in more detail and examine how they were taken up and deployed.

6.1 The sexually stigmatised woman

As I discussed in Chapter 3, in the context of Irish social history, female chastity was regarded as a matter of national pride in post-independence Ireland. Following the formation of the independent Republic in 1937, a great deal of emphasis was placed on sexual morality as an aspect of Irish identities (Ferriter, 2009). According to Smith (2004), the discourse of sexual stigmatisation is frequently characterised as something from the past; from an Ireland that has totally changed. This next extract is from the Tiggy, the grandmother in Family 1. In it, she talks about the meaning of single motherhood and picks up the sexually stigmatized woman discourse.

Extract 4 (*f1 Group A, 78-86*)

- | | | |
|---|---------------|---|
| 1 | Tiggy: | well I think older people (.) older (.) now (.) I wouldn't say my |
| 2 | | generation(.) but older than me now (.) are looking down their noses (.) |
| 3 | | because going back remember there was so many unwanted (.) well I |
| 4 | | wouldn't say unwanted (.) pregnancies (.) but women having babies (.) |
| 5 | | god love them (.) that had to give them away (.) the shame of being (.) the |
| 6 | | stigma of being a single mother going back in my mother's era (.) you |
| 7 | | know (.) It was a disgrace to the family (.) not thinking about the poor girl |
| 8 | | and how she got into that (.) all the blame was put on the women (.) not |

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9 (.) the men got away scot free (.) do you understand (.) but nowadays I
10 think it's (.) they're more open (.) it's eh every second young girl (.) I won't
11 say every second young girl (.) but say 5 out of 10 are unmarried mothers
12 (.) you know (.) but who would part with them (.) for god sake

By locating her account of the sexually stigmatised woman, who was a 'disgrace to the family' (line 8), and a cause of 'shame' and 'stigma' (line 6) as originating with 'older people (.) older than me now' (lines 1,2,3) and 'going back to my mother's era' (line 7), Tiggy distances herself and contemporary Irish society from the days when women 'had to give them [babies] away' (lines 5,6), whilst also arguing, as Smith (2004) has pointed out, that due to social progress, these discourses are no longer in circulation. She does a great deal of work to present herself as a loving and good mother who would always welcome a baby, even going so far as to suggest that pregnancy is never unwelcome 'there was so many unwanted (.) well I wouldn't say unwanted' (lines 3,4) but who would part with them (.) for god sake' (lines 13, 14). In arguing in this way, she positions herself as compassionate - 'God love them' (line 4) - and aware of unkindness, injustice - 'not thinking of the poor girl' (lines 6, 7) - and double standards - 'how she got into that' (lines 7, 8).

However, a number of ideological dilemmas (Billig, 1998) remain unresolved in Tiggy's account. Firstly, Tiggy's references to 'the poor girl' (line 8) as worthy of pity and to who was 'blamed' (line 9) indicate that pregnancies were indeed unwelcome. Her contention that 'nowadays I think it's (.) they're more open' (line 11) is another reference to changing attitudes to out of wedlock child bearing. However, she then goes on to draw on the discourse of moral panic (Kerry, 2007) in relation to increasing numbers of young women

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‘every second young girl’ (line 9), ‘I won’t say every second young girl (.) but say 5 out of 10’ (lines 10, 11). As discussed in Chapter 3, this claim is not supported by the figures. Her final statement ‘but who would part with them (.) for god’s sake’ (line 11) suggests that she is still welcoming to the babies and would certainly never reject a child. In addition, she has distanced herself from taking up a position as someone who would criticise women for having children whilst unmarried by referencing this as something that happened in her ‘mother’s era’. However, there is an ideological dilemma in the talk. On the one hand, she takes up a position as someone who would always welcome a child and, on the other hand, she expresses reservations about large numbers of young girls having babies. Her dilemma is one of how to uphold moral standards of behaviour, but on the other as not condemning others because, she has argued, this kind of condemnation is a thing of the past. The sexual stigmatisation discourse that was presented in this extract, and in many parts of the interview data, was mobilised as something that happened in an Ireland of a former historical period in which women had no access to contraception and could potentially be ostracised or incarcerated for out of wedlock child-bearing.

The sexually stigmatised woman discourse also appeared in talk of the women’s own experiences. The following two extracts from Tara, the granddaughter in Family 2 and Julie, the daughter in Family 1, illustrate this point².

² Grouped extracts will be numbered consecutively to avoid confusion when identifying parts of each extract

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Extract 5 (*f2 Gd 97-101*)

- 1 **Tara:** ahh (.) well I didn't (.) go into town (.) once I started showing (.) I
2 remember crying (.) 'no one's going to want me now because I am
3 pregnant' and (laughing softly)
- 4 **Lisa:** Really
- 5 **Tara:** Yeah (.) I think my mind was like (.) 'I am never ever going to have a
6 boyfriend (.) and you know (.) I won't get married or any of that'

Extract 6 (*f1D 1 23-29*)

- 7 **Julie:** he was the type of person who would say to you (.) well he just wasn't a
8 nice person (.) em he basically told me that because I was used property
9 with a child that no man would ever want me (.) and I was it em (.) he
10 was it (.) he was the only man that would ever want me (.) he convinced
11 me of that fact (.) yeah (.) so that's the only reason I stayed with him (.)
12 because I thought he was right because at the time (.) it was taboo to have
13 a child out of marriage so em (.) I did actually believe him

In both of these extracts, the women allude to discourses about the need for a woman to remain sexually pure and chaste in order to be marriageable. Tara, the granddaughter in Family 2, who had her first child in 2009, talks of crying 'no one's going to want me now because I am pregnant' (line 2) and 'I'm never going to have a boyfriend' (line 5) 'I won't get married or any of that' (line 6). Whilst Julie, the daughter in Family 1, whose first child was born in 1992, identifies out of wedlock childbearing as a 'taboo' (line 12) and goes on to argue that she stayed with the child's father because she believed that she was 'used property' (line 8), whom no man, other than the father of her child 'would ever want' (line

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9). These claims are presented as former fears that proved to be unfounded. Indeed, both women told me that they were with new partners at the time of the interviews.

In parts of the interviews, like when Tiggy says ‘well I think older people (.) older (.) now (.) I wouldn’t say my generation(.) but older than me now (.) are looking down their noses (.)’, in extract 4 (lines 1,2), the women in this study appeared to argue that the need for female chastity as a marker of respectability was a thing of the past. However, in other parts of the interviews, it appeared to be argued that certain levels of sexual restraint are still necessary for a woman to attain respectability. Herein lies some of the trouble that emerges when single motherhood is talked about by single mothers and their families.

The following extract is from an interview with Sarah, the granddaughter in Family 4.

Extract 7 (f4 GD 25-27)

- | | | |
|---|---------------|---|
| 1 | Lisa: | and tell me about (.) we were talking earlier on about some girls kinda |
| 2 | | getting a bad name (.) what would (.) get a girl of your age a bad name (.) |
| 3 | | what would she have to do to get a bad name |
| 4 | Sarah: | going off with loads of different fellas (.) and dyknow (.) doing whatever |
| 5 | | they say and not having respect for herself |

In this extract, the topic of sexuality is approached without the use of direct references to sex. This delicacy can be seen as an observation of local moral orders when talking about a topic that is troubled. The silences and omissions that appear in the talk of delicate subjects will be explored further in Chapter 7. I ask Sarah ‘what would (.) get a girl of your age a bad name’ (lines 2, 3) ‘what would she have to do’ (lines 2, 3) is met with an argument that is equally devoid of words explicitly relating to sex or sexuality ‘going off with loads of

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different fellas' (line 4) 'doing whatever they say and not having respect for herself' (line 5). Having or obtaining a 'bad name' in this exchange between Sarah and me, is to do with sexual availability, which is presented as lack of self-respect. In the following extract, Julie talks about sexual stigmatisation in relation to single mothers.

Extract 8 (*f1 Group A 132-136*)

- 1 **Julie:** well (.) unfortunately there's an awful lot of people around this town that
2 they see a single mother and the first thing they call her is not a very
3 pleasant name (.) dyknow (.) and (.) it's not the case (.) it just is not the
4 case (.) but an awful lot of people will go round saying she's loose (.) she's
5 a tramp (.) she's a whore (.) and it's not fair to label a person like that just
6 because they got pregnant (.) it's not fair

Julie identifies the kinds of things that might be said about a woman who appears to be sexually promiscuous - 'she's loose (.) she's a tramp (.) she's a whore' (line 4). She argues, not for the permissive discourse discussed in Chapter 2 (Hollway, 1989), but that the people who say such things are 'unfortunately' (line 1) wrong 'it's not the case (.) it just is not the case' (line 3) and unjust 'it's not fair to label a person like that just because they got pregnant (.) It's not fair' (lines 5, 6). What is interesting about the use of terms like 'she's loose (.) she's a tramp' in this extract from Julie, is the imagined source of the statements. She locates these characterisations with an 'awful lot of people around this town' (lines 3, 4). Similar imagined criticisms can be seen in Tiggy's characterisation of people 'looking down their noses' in Extract 4, Tara's staying out of sight when she began 'showing' in Extract 5, and the people who might give someone a 'bad name' in Extract 7. It would appear, then, that the primary way in which sexual stigmatisation is communicated, is as a

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result of what Foucault described as the gaze: an internalised imagined surveillance, which causes people to manage their sexual behaviour, or accounts of sexual behaviour, in particular ways.

Across the data, there was no evidence of a challenge to the sexual stigmatisation discourses or the use of permissive discourses (Hollway, 1989) to counter the notion that women should not be promiscuous. Instead, the women argued that these characterisations did not apply to them. In establishing these arguments, discourses relating to naiveté, lack of information and lack of interest in sex were drawn on. Extracts 9 -11 illustrate this.

Extract 9 (f1 D 2-5)

- 1 **Lisa:** so em (.) tell me about when you got pregnant
- 2 **Julie:** oh gosh yeah (.) that was shocking (.) well actually it was weird (.) I have
- 3 three older sisters (.) my mother (.) and it was never spoken about sex
- 4 was never spoken about in our household (.) ever (.) so I was 18 but I was
- 5 so innocent (.) so so innocent (.) I had absolutely no idea about nothing

Extract 10 (f6 G 32-36)

- 6 **Kate:** I think so yes (.) it was alright like (.) but I thought oh my god is this what
- 7 it's all about (.) you know (.) I suppose I would have been (.) did you ever
- 8 hear of people saying (.) they were frigid (.) and it was dirty and that
- 9 wasn't done (.) so that's it (.) and then I suppose I was very bitter that I
- 10 got pregnant after the first time

Extract 11 (f1 Group A 350-352)

- 11 **Aoife:** yeah (.) that's cos I was (.) that's cos I was such a good pupil and I was so
12 quiet like (.) and no one expected that

These three extracts, taken together, show examples of talk that argues that the pregnancies of these particular women were out of character for them, 'that was shocking (.) well actually it was weird' (line 2) 'I got pregnant after the first time' (lines 9, 10). In doing so, the women distance themselves from any suggestion that they might be sexually promiscuous and avoid taking up a position as a sexually stigmatized woman. Kate's statement about sex 'is this what it's all about' (lines 7, 8) also works to present her as someone who was not interested in sex for enjoyment. Inglis and MacKeogh's (2012) argument about Irish women being caught in a double bind of sexual availability and chastity, is evident in this statement. Julie takes up a position of innocence, which establishes that she is not and was not sexually available. In accounting for the unexpected nature of her pregnancy, Julie draws upon lack of information: 'it was never spoken about sex was never spoken about in our household' (lines 3, 4). This construction of silence on sexual matters was repeated again and again across the interviews. In addition, the pregnancy was presented as something out of character for the women, 'so I was 18 but I was so innocent (.) so so innocent (.) I had absolutely no idea about nothing' (lines 4, 5), 'I was very bitter that I got pregnant after the first time' (lines 9, 10), 'I was such a good pupil and I was so quiet like (.) no one expected that' (line 11, 12).

It appears then that the priority for these women is to present versions of themselves that are respectable. As Skeggs (1997) notes, 'Respectability is usually the concern of those who are not seen to have it' (p.1). In order to negotiate the trouble that arises due to possibly

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being sexually stigmatised by imagined others, constructions of naiveté and innocence are mobilised.

The final extract in this section also exemplifies some of the issues relating to sexual stigmatisation in relation to pregnancy as a result of a 'one-night stand'.

Extract 12 (f5 GD 213-222)

- 1 **Jaqueline:** yeah 'oh she's a single mum oh don't associate with her' em the one thing
2 that stands to me is that I'm quite well educated (.) and em I was always
3 quite clever and you know I I'll survive and but it does really get to me
4 when (.) people automatically kind of look down on you for some reason
5 like who you are
- 6 **Lisa:** Yeah
- 7 **Jaqueline:** people assume that Luke's the result of a one-night stand (.) they
8 shouldn't look down on (.) you like that
- 9 **Lisa:** yes
- 10 **Jaqueline:** em my grandmother said that everyone is entitled to make one mistake
11 and (.) I love her to bits but I just think (.) her use of saying that me being
12 a single mum is a mistake and that Luke's a mistake (.) he was planned
- 13 **Lisa:** yes
- 14 **Jaqueline:** and you know (.) everyone is entitled to make one mistake and not more
15 than one (.) well (.) so Luke's my one-night stand (.) mistake he's the one
16 that is acceptable because it was a mistake but it wasn't a mistake haha
- 17 **Lisa:** yeah

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In this extract, Jacqueline constructs herself as having experienced stigmatisation ‘oh she’s a single mum oh don’t associate with her’ (line 1) ‘but it does really get to me when (.) people automatically kind of look down on you for some reason like’ (lines 3,4) in Jacqueline’s account her identity ‘who you are’ (line 4) is positioned by others who ‘assume that Luke’s the result of a one-night stand’, causing them to ‘look down’ (lines 6,7) on her. Jacqueline mobilises talk of the irresponsible woman who became pregnant as a result of a one-night stand, and establishes her own respectability in terms of sexual behaviour - ‘he was planned’ (line 12) it wasn’t a mistake (line 15). In addition, she distances herself from being uneducated, ‘I’m quite well educated (.) and em I was always quite clever’ (line 2).

6.2 The neoliberal failure

As discussed in Chapter 3, single mothers and, in particular, teenage mothers are constructed as lacking the skills to parent, as well as lacking ambition for themselves and their children (Duncan, et al., 2010). Such women have also been stereotyped in the British media as ‘Chavs’ (Tyler, 2008). Alldred and David (2010) argue that women who are welfare dependant, unmarried, and young are constructed as a neoliberal failure: irresponsible, uneducated, and unable or unwilling to participate in the world of work. In this section, I will identify some of the ways of talking that exemplify aspects of the neoliberal failure discourse and then go on to show how respectability is negotiated in this context. This next extract is from Carly, the granddaughter in Family 7.

Extract 13 (f7 Group A 312-315)

- 1 **Carly:** I think that it’s all (.) like, when I think of single mothers (.) I’m one myself
2 (.) but when you think of single mothers you think of bloody knackers with

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- 3 the big clips in the heads (.) you know (.) and I am a single mother but I'm
4 telling you that's what I think (.) It's not right (.) like

Carly, the granddaughter from Family 7, uses the phrase 'bloody knackers with the big clips in the heads' (lines 2, 3) to indicate a social class positioning (Skeggs, 1997), with reference to a particular style of dress. Although the term 'knacker' is a slang word in Ireland for a member of the Traveller community, it is also used to denote someone who is poor and might be regarded as calling up a similar stereotype to that of the 'Chav' (Tyler, 2008) discussed in Chapter 2. Carly acknowledges her dilemma of stake in this by identifying her own relation to the term 'single mother' (lines 1, 3) and noting 'it's not right (.) like' (line 4), though it isn't clear whether she is referring to the 'knacker' identity or her own thinking in relation to single mothers.

As has been discussed in Chapter 5, speakers are faced with a dilemma of stake when they orient their talk to counter a possibility of bias, by acknowledging that she herself might be constructed in this way. This allows her to present her own talk of single motherhood as unbiased. However, in the talk generated for this study, the dilemma of stake was that they were endorsing ideas which potentially positioned them in ways that were negative or not respectable. The dilemma that they needed to negotiate, then, was that, whilst such ideas might be applied to them, they did not apply in their case. The utilisation of sometimes strong language 'bloody knackers' served as a means of distancing themselves from a position that was most certainly not desirable. She takes up a position as different to this kind of impoverished neoliberal failure.

In the next two extracts from Family 3, Sheila is from the daughter generation and Annie is the grandmother. Both of these women had a first child whilst unmarried and under the

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age of 20. They argue that, whilst they were not to blame for their pregnancies, today's young women are able to avoid pregnancy.

Extract 14 (*f3 group A 70-75*)

- 1 **Sheila:** well there's so much (.) contraceptives and everything out there like (.)
2 what (.) like (.) any (.) every second person (.) has a child
3 **Annie:** yeah
4 **Sheila:** and I don't know is it a lot of like (.) it's all the (.) the money they get (.)
5 this and that like (.) there's so much (.) even in my time (.) it wasn't as (.)
6 yaknow talked about as much (.) contraceptives and everything
7 **Annie:** that's right yeah
8 **Sheila:** I mean there's so much there and every second young one (.) has a buggy
9 and it's like they can get a house and they can get this and that

Sheila draws on discourses relating to the moral panic about the multitude of young single women, who are assumed to be having children - 'every second person (.) has a child' 'every second young one' (lines 2, 8). This multitude of teenage mothers might be seen as imagined, since, as I have discussed in Chapter 4, the figures do not support this contention and are, in fact, reducing. These imagined young women, Sheila argues, are having babies for 'the money they get' (line 4), 'they can get a house and they can get this and that' (line 9). She positions the availability of contraception as either indicative of irresponsibility, or deliberately getting pregnant for social welfare (lines 1, 8) whilst at the same time resolving her own dilemma of stake by saying 'even in my time (.) it wasn't as (.) yaknow talked about as much (.) contraceptives and everything' (line 1). The grandmother in this family, Annie, made similar contrasts when I interviewed her individually.

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Extract 15 (*f3G 67-73*)

- 1 **Annie:** but like we didn't get anything like the unmarried mothers are getting
2 now I think they're getting too much (.) I don't agree with it at all (.) I really
3 don't (.) dyknow (.) I just think they need to be (.) led to go back to what
4 (.) back to education or do something yknow there's plenty of things
5 there now for (.) dyknow I definitely think (.) you know (.) we didn't have
6 those opportunities (.) they've all those opportunities now we had
7 nothing (.) what was there for us only sit in and rear the children there
8 was another one eleven months later (.) that kind of thing (.) and then the
9 next one that's the way it went yeah

Annie contrasts herself with the girls who deliberately get pregnant for welfare and housing. She argues that they have too many benefits (lines 1, 2) and do not take up opportunities that are available to them (line 4). She contrasts this against her own lack of opportunity (lines 5, 6) and the constant pregnancy associated with lack of availability of contraception (line 7, 8). She does not take up a position as a neoliberal failure herself, because she did not refuse to participate; she was excluded at a time when current facilities for family planning and education were not available. In these extracts, the neoliberal failure is constructed as 'getting too much' (line 1). This raises an ideological dilemma relating to the financial benefits of living on welfare. The women argue that welfare payments are so attractive that they are preferable to obtaining work. This is despite the data discussed in Chapter 4, that one parent families had the highest rate of consistent poverty of any household type, in 2015, at 26.2%, and that this was an increase from 25% in 2014 (S.I.L.C, 2015). In the following extract, Marie, the middle generation in the group,

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talks about her own pregnancy at the age of 16. Cait is her mother, the grandmother in the family.

Extract 16 (*f4 Group B 77-280*)

- 1 **Marie:** they're all going off now and having babies at sixteen and seventeen
- 2 **Cait:** yeah
- 3 **Marie:** tis the thing to do like
- 4 **Cait:** it seems to be
- 5 **Marie:** sure I remember when I found out I was pregnant (.) with Sarah (.) the
- 6 rumour that was going around here was that I was only doing it to be like
- 7 my sister
- 8 **Cait:** mm
- 9 **Marie:** dyknow (.) but I didn't care what they were saying (.) for a lot of em now
- 10 I think it's the money (.) they're doing it to get the one parent family
- 11 income (.) not that it's great or it helps you do anything but (.) the only
- 12 thing is with the one parent family income is you can work but I think
- 13 that's reasonable

Once again, Marie begins this extract drawing on the argument that young women are 'all going off now and having babies at sixteen and seventeen' (line 1). She draws upon the notion of gaze by saying that a 'rumour' (line 6) had circulated that she wanted to be like her sister, who had also had a child as a teenager (line 6). She does not refute this directly, instead preferring to dismiss this with 'I didn't care what they were saying' (line 8). This either leaves open the possibility that she did get pregnant to emulate her sister, but more likely is a way of dismissing the rumour as the kind of thing that imagined others say, and thus not worthy of refutation. Marie then goes on to position these imagined 16 year olds

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of 'now' (line 1) who are 'all going off and having babies' as 'doing it to get the one parent family income' (line 9). There is an ideological dilemma in this claim, 'not that it's great or it helps you do anything' (line 10). Welfare dependence is thus positioned as desirable to other single mothers, but not sufficient to meet her own needs. She is faced with the problem that she is criticising women on welfare whilst she herself is on welfare, by arguing that she is able to work 'the only thing is with the one parent family income is you can work (.) but I think that's reasonable' (lines 11-13). This is a complex set of claims, which seems to say that it is reasonable to be expected to work, or perhaps implies that her welfare dependence is different from the women who are 'going off now and having babies at sixteen and seventeen' (line 1) because she works. She does not, however, resolve the issue of her own welfare dependence.

In this next extract, Jacqueline attempts to resolve this dilemma of criticising lone parents on welfare whilst being a lone parent on welfare herself, with reference to the assumed dishonesty of some single mothers.

Extract 17 (*f5 group B 307-314*)

- 1 **Jacqueline:** you know you have the story of lone parents and they have their
- 2 boyfriends living with them and they have they're still claiming lone
- 3 parents (.) I mean that gives lone parents a terrible name for doing that
- 4 em and that goes on an awful lot and they're clamping down on that em
- 5 (.) but it's just a lot a lot of preconceptions that people have of lone
- 6 parents are based on things that they have heard (.) or based on things
- 7 that they suspect dyknow when people meet me (.) and likewise I've

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8 spoken to other lone parents (.) when people meet me and they find that
9 I'm articulate and they find that yknow they see me with my son and then
10 when they find out that I'm a lone parent they're kind of shocked because
11 (.) I don't fit into the stereotype

Jaqueline justifies her welfare payment by positioning herself as not like 'lone parents and they have their boyfriends living with them' (lines 1, 2). These women are positioned as giving 'lone parents a terrible name'. This extract is a nice example of the ways in which Billig (1991) theorises the rhetorical orientation of talk to potential arguments that might be made. Jaqueline's talk also appears to draw on what Breen and Devereux (2003) describe as discourses of the undeserving poor. She contrasts this with her own presentation as someone who is 'articulate' (line 8) and such a good mother that other lone parents are 'shocked' (line 10) to discover that she is a lone parent too.

This take-up of the position of good mother like any other was the primary way in which the women in this study managed to distance themselves from the subject position of the neoliberal failure. This is explored further in the next section.

This section will conclude with an extract which will be used to draw out the kind of single mother that the women in this study constructed but also were at pains to distance themselves from, in terms of their own identities. This extract is from the daughter in Family 2, Siobhan, who became pregnant at the age of 18, married the father of her child, and went on to have a further four children with him, later returning to college as a mature student and completing a degree.

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Extract 18 (f2 S 497-550)

- 1 **Siobhan:** do you know (.) like I (.) another girl as well (.) she is single and she had six
2 kids (.) but highly intelligent
- 3 **Lisa:** and does anybody say anything about her
- 4 **Siobhan:** oh sure she is ostracised (.) the poor
- 5 **Lisa:** is she
- 6 **Siobhan:** she is (.) they'd be neglected (.) they'd be (.) even though she has brains
7 to burn you know (.) and again I am as bad because I will always speak to
8 her because I met her in school and we were at school together
- 9 **Lisa:** okay
- 10 **Siobhan:** they have three generations living on social welfare (.) wouldn't (.) what
11 would you go and get a job for (.) because you would end up with less and
12 whatever(.) again(.)It's sad because she was such an intelligent girl (.) now
13 the attitude then of a lot of people is (.) if the Vincent de Paul didn't help
14 her and if social didn't help her (.) she'd have no choice but to go out and
15 work (.) and the attitude and it would be said (.) it's an awful thing to say
16 (.) would be that (.) well if she was out working all day (.) she couldn't be
17 making babies at night time
- 18 **Lisa:** and she has no partner at all
- 19 **Siobhan:** no (.) they are all different partners (.) all different fathers to the children

In this quite lengthy extract, Siobhan constructs a version of the neoliberal failure who is nothing like herself. This woman has elements of the welfare queen stereotype about her. She has shunned educational opportunity 'highly intelligent' (line 2) 'brains to burn' (lines

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6, 7) 'such an intelligent girl' (lines 12, 13). Whilst such a characterisation is complimentary, it also positions the woman as having failed to utilise her talents and the resources available to her to obtain work. She is positioned as the undeserving poor (Breen and Devereux, 2003). Welfare is argued as being attractive to the woman in Siobhan's story 'what would you get a job for (.) because you would end up with less' (lines 10, 11). In this account, the woman is facilitated by charitable donations 'Vincent de Paul' (line 13). Availability of welfare is argued to be a problem in this extract, 'they have three generations living on social welfare (.) wouldn't (.) what would you go and get a job for (.) because you would end up with less and whatever' (line 10), causing a cycle of intergenerational welfare dependence. If she had work, it is argued she 'couldn't be making babies at night' (lines 16, 17). Her children are also 'neglected' (line 6). She is thus a bad mother.

In addition, this woman's children lack a father in their lives 'all different partners (.) all different fathers to the children' (line 19). Indeed, having children by all different fathers was constructed across the data as something to be avoided as evidence of a kind of sexually stigmatized woman. Siobhan excludes herself from being critical or judgemental of this woman who 'is ostracised' by saying 'and again I am as bad because I will always speak to her' (lines 7, 8). She thus takes up a subject position as someone who is compassionate, unlike those who ostracise the woman. Also, it is clear that she argues that she is not like this woman at all. The woman that Siobhan constructs might usefully be regarded as the kind of exemplar identified by Inglis (2002) in his discussion of the Kerry babies case, who steps outside the boundaries of accepted female behaviour and is shunned as a result.

6.3 The good mother like any other

As discussed in Chapter 2, a good mother has been constructed as someone with almost superhuman powers. She is self-sacrificing, attentive to her children's needs, and essential to the wellbeing of her children (Rich, 1977; Kennedy, 2004; O'Reilly, 2010). In addition, the popularity of attachment parenting means that increasing demands are being made on parents, and in the main mothers (Ermann, et al., 2014). In this section, I am presenting an argument that the women in this study took up identities as good mothers because this is a way of working up an acceptable identity, which manages the trouble that arises from the intersection of discourses of being unmarried and welfare dependent and thus, potentially subject to being positioned by *the sexually stigmatised woman* discourse and/or *the neoliberal failure* discourse. As I discussed in Chapter 2, this for Rose (2008) is where agency is apparent, in the discourses that are mobilised when working up identities. In taking up a position as a good mother, these women are positioning themselves as untroubled subjects. They are like any other mother. The good mother position was worked up frequently by women in this study. The following extract is from Margaret, the grandmother in Family 2.

Extract 19 (f2 G 35-39)

- | | | |
|---|------------------|---|
| 1 | Margaret: | now (.) the oldest wasn't at school (.) She was one and a half (.) one and |
| 2 | | a half (.) two and a half (.) four and a half (.) because Julie went to the |
| 3 | | school when she was able to and she had all her prayers and things by the |
| 4 | | time she did go to school because I had done (.) but I love kids and I love |
| 5 | | family like (.) I love cooking (.) I love looking after them |

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In this extract, Margaret takes up a subject position of a mother who is fulfilled by mothering 'I love kids and I love family like (.) I love cooking (.) I love looking after them' (lines 4, 6). She constructs a version of mothering three preschool children as one in which she had fulfilled her role as a primary educator of her children - 'Julie went to the school when she was able to and she had all her prayers and things by the time she did go to school because I had done' (lines 3,4). This account is similar in style to the construction in the Irish Constitution of a woman who, 'by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved' (Constitution of Ireland, 1937). She constructs herself as willingly and with love looking after her children. She follows this statement about what she had done to prepare her child with the statement about how much she loved it all. Her identification of prayers as an important part of her mothering role indicate that the pastoral power of the church (Foucault, 1982) is still in evidence in her talk. Margaret, then, positions herself as someone who was naturally suited to the role of mothering and fulfilled by it. She also takes up some of the discourses of the state and the church to work up this identity. The concept of intense love for children and enjoyment of mothering was repeated across the data. Here, Erín, the middle generation of Family 6 talks about her immediate love for her children when they were born.

Extract 20 (f6 Group B 45-48)

- | | | |
|---|--------------|---|
| 1 | Erín: | And our 3 children and I can honestly say (.) the moment I met my children |
| 2 | | (.) the minute I held them (.) they are the three things that I have in my |
| 3 | | head as being the most precious things in my life (.) So even at 16 (.) and |
| 4 | | I would have had 36 stitches (.) I was torn on the inside |

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Erín also constructs an account of having made an instant attachment to her children even in the context of physical injury from childbirth ‘I would have had 36 stitches (.) I was torn on the inside’ (lines 3, 4). Her own needs are argued to be much less important than the love that she experienced. In doing so, she draws on the naturalness and immediacy of ‘bonding’ (Bowlby, 1969; Lorenz, 1965) and argues for her own attachment to her children. There is a sense for some participants that being a mother is an identity project in itself. This would certainly fit with the role of women that was constructed in the Irish constitution but also with more contemporary ‘attachment parenting’ (Ermann, et al., 2014) discourses.

However, this single role identity is in conflict with the requirements for the ideal mother to be a consumer who makes good and bad choices (Thompson, 2010), as well as being problematic in terms of the amount of time and effort it would take to accomplish all of these things.

Extract 21 (f6 Group A 465 – 471)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | Erín: it’s kind of like some people that have had kids (.) they are given options |
| 2 | (.) like ‘I’ll go and get my money off social welfare (.) I’ll be fine (.) don’t |
| 3 | need to work’ (.) that kind of way (.) it’s like people are just accepting (.) I |
| 4 | don’t need to work, (.) being lazy about it (.) whereas you can go out and |
| 5 | do stuff (.) just because you are a single mum (.) doesn’t mean you can’t |
| 6 | do everything (.) you can do it if you want to do it (.) I think people are |
| 7 | being a bit lazy about things (.) I don’t know if lazy is the right word (.) but |
| 8 | they have no hope |

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As well as utilising the failed neoliberal subject discourse, ‘I’ll go and get my money off social welfare (.) I’ll be fine (.) don’t need to work’ (line 2), Erin’s words might also be read as a criticism of the full time mother and homemaker that was once idealised and indeed compulsory for many women in the past. Her focus on ‘options’ (line 1) just accepting (line 3) and the possibility that a woman can ‘do everything’ (line 6) is, indeed, in line with the neoliberal ideal but it also raises an ideological dilemma for those who give up careers to take care of children, as postulated by the ‘new Momism’ suggested by O’Reilly (2010). In this context, women who do not work outside the home are characterised as ‘lazy’ (lines 4, 5, 6) or at least ‘lacking hope’ (line 7). Work outside the home, in this context, is thus presented as an important part of good mothering (not being lazy), as well as an opportunity for the woman.

Whilst work is argued to be an important part of what a mother should aspire to, there was an explicit expectation that the needs of children, even adult children, should come before a mother’s own needs. Take the following quotation from Julie, I had asked her about her plans for the future.

Extract 22 (*f1D 109-115*)

- | | | |
|---|---------------|--|
| 1 | Julie: | Helping my children in every possible way that I can (.) in any way that I |
| 2 | | can (.) em (.) I would actually give up (.) em let me see (.) I put my life on |
| 3 | | hold when Aoife got pregnant (.) I really did (.) em (.) I gave up working |
| 4 | | fulltime so she could continue on in school (.) I mean I would do anything |
| 5 | | for my children to make their life way better than mine |

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The maternal imperative for Julie, then, is that she must help her 'children in every possible way that I can' (line 1). She begins to say that she would 'give up' and then offers a concrete example, 'I put my life on hold when Aoife got pregnant (.) I really did, em (.) I gave up working fulltime so she could continue on in school' (lines 4, 5). In common with many of the mother across the data, a central concern was 'to make their life way better than mine' (lines 4, 5). Whether or not women in the study talked about work outside the home as important, all of the talk that was generated on the subject positioned a mother as someone who puts her children's needs first. Tara, the granddaughter in Family 2, also talked about lazy mothers.

Extract 23 (f2GD 300-314)

- 1 **Tara:** a good mother (.) um (.) top of the list is I think (.) being (.) Interacting
2 with them (.) I hate to see a lazy mother who is like (.) 'yeah I'll talk to you
3 in a minute' (.) because I'm busy doing this or that or on computer (.) that
4 irritates me because that is what (.) you know (.) they might just want
5 something so simple and you are just (.) because you want (.) I don't know
6 (.) just if they want you to be like (.) and I think now with the internet and
7 em (.) stuff that distracts (.) mothers from being at home (.) when they're
8 at home (.) sitting at the computer (.) that annoys me (.) bigtime because
9 y'know (.) you can take it out in the evening or something because when
10 they want something it might just be something so small (.) and it is going
11 to affect them so much (.) they are thinking 'why wasn't I good enough to
12 get a little bit of attention' or something like that (.) and that is being a
13 good mother (.) teaching them right from wrong you know making sure

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- 14 they are up in time for school (.) not being lazy I think because (.) you
15 know making sure that they know that they are loved (.) and that they get
16 the attention they need

Tara's characterisation of motherhood involves ensuring that children get attention. She takes up a position of concern for psychological needs when she says that children who are not attended to by mothers, who are doing other things, might be damaged by the experience 'and it is going to affect them so much (.) they are thinking 'why wasn't I good enough to get a little bit of attention' or something like that' (lines 11, 12). In this extract, a mother must be ready to attend to her children at all times and not be distracted by 'sitting at the computer' (line 8). For Tara, then, mothers who are not immediately available to their children are 'lazy' (lines 2, 14) and a mother's primary function is 'making sure that they know that they are loved and that they get the attention that they need' (lines 15, 16). This is certainly a very high standard of maternal dedication, which is very much in line with the 'new Momism' identified by O'Reilly (2010).

Mothering was also identified with taking responsibility for the lives of other family members. Sheila, the daughter in Family 3, gave the example of an upcoming holiday that she had planned away from her husband and son.

Extract 24 (*f3 D 122 – 132*)

- 1 **Sheila:** it's just kind of (.) you do everything (.) I end up having to do ev (.) yknow
2 (.) it's like I'd be worried about them all the time (.) making sure (.) like
3 I'm going to (.) like even (.) I'm going to New York in November (.) and I'm
4 (.) oh my god will Dave be able to cope (.) will Evan (.) will Evan be able

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5 to cope without me (.) you know that type of (.) only just (.) I don't know
6 if I maybe mollycoddled (.) and I do (.) Evan being a boy and everything (.)
7 he's so immature and (.) girls are so kind of (.) boys are way weaker like
8 (.) when they're (.) boys are more affectionate so I kind of mollycoddle
9 him (.) so like will I leave him (.) yknow cause I do everything nearly (.)
10 yknow (.) he barely (.) he just about dresses himself (.)that type of a way
11 (.) so it just (.) I just did everything

Sheila positions herself as doing 'everything' (lines 1, 10, and 11). She mobilises the concept of them being 'mollycoddled' (line 6, 9) but argues that this is essential because of her maternal concern, 'I'd be worried about them all the time' (line 2) and about their inability to cope (lines 4, 5). She positions her son as helpless, 'he just about dresses himself' (line 10), 'so immature' (line 7), and 'weaker' (line 7) but also alludes to the emotional rewards of such care 'boys are more affectionate' (line 8). In positioning herself as essential and as meeting their needs, she is constructing a version of good mothering. Her concern about her son's helplessness indicates a questioning of her good mothering. By 'doing everything' (lines 1, 10 11), she has taken up a position that keeps her tied to mothering and makes it difficult for her to leave. She mobilises talk about the things that a good mother does (everything, mollycoddling, worrying), which potentially questions whether or not she has prepared her family adequately for her absence during the holiday. Her mothering, then, is performed as all-consuming.

6.4 Chapter conclusions

This chapter has introduced three discourses that are mobilised by the women when talking about single motherhood: the *sexually stigmatised woman*, the *neoliberal failure*, and the *good mother like any other*. The women utilise these discourses without contesting them as ways of positioning women in general. However, it is other women who are positioned as sexually stigmatised and it is other women who are positioned as neoliberal failures. These women use a variety of strategies to distance themselves from these discourses, taking up positions of 'them not me'. Sexual stigmatisation is avoided by taking up positions of a lack of sexual knowledge and of not having had access to contraception. They position themselves in opposition to women who have all different fathers for their children and as women who are responsible in their sexual behaviour. There is a complete absence of take-up positions of sexual independence or sexually permissive approaches.

The neoliberal failure is negotiated by positions of wanting to work, engaging in education, and of being honest and deserving recipients of welfare, unlike the women who, like the undeserving poor, claim welfare fraudulently and make no attempt to obtain work or take opportunities that are available. In doing so, they are avoiding the categorisation of the exemplar woman who has multiple fathers for her children, has no desire to work, and who is neglectful of her children. There is no talk of welfare dependence as a viable and reasonable choice, or of it being acceptable to remain on welfare. Indeed, it appears that these women are 'discursively projecting' troubled identities onto imagined exemplars. The use of discursive projection follows McAvoy's (2009) use of the term. This theorisation will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 9, when I assess the contribution of the thesis.

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Rather than taking up the *sexually stigmatized woman* discourse or the *neoliberal failure* discourse, the women work up versions of themselves as respectable women and, above all else, good mothers who are attentive to their children's emotional, educational, and physical needs. In doing so, they endorse and perform the construct of 'New Momism' (Douglas and Michaels, 2004): the unrealistic and intensive mothering that is available to only a small number of middle class mothers. The mothers in this study, then, lay claim to the good mother like any other. In doing this, they construct respectability and avoid association with the exemplar and construct for themselves the kind of respectability that is conferred by taking up the position of a good mother.

This lack of resistance to the notion that women should be sexually stigmatised, or that welfare is a viable life choice, might be regarded as essential in the face of the trouble that arises from the very existence the first two discourses. The good mother, like any other, offers a way of negotiating respectability by utilising a discourse that idealises mothering and accomplishes respectability.

The next chapter will examine how family relationships are managed in the context of single motherhood and examine some of the ways in which the trouble that arises for families is negotiated in talk.

Chapter 7. Family roles and relationships

This chapter presents data that I identified when I was examining answers to the question: How were versions of family worked up in the interviews?

The chapter begins with an examination of the kinds of family that were constructed in the context of talk about single motherhood. Interpretative repertoires relating to help and support, as well as protection and care, were mobilised. Intergenerational support was constructed as a replacement for an absent partner or husband and the pregnancy as a problem that the family needed to manage. Families were constructed as a united and cohesive group who worked together in troubled circumstances. Participants narrate versions of families who are engaged in continuous, supportive and ongoing relationships (Taylor and Littleton, 2003). However, I argue that the pregnancy is also constructed as a problem that impacts on the reputation of the family as a whole. In this context, families are subject to the gaze and scrutiny of unseen or imagined members of the community outside the family. I present extracts of narratives in which the women talk about being made invisible by their families, being made invisible by institutions, and making themselves invisible.

The chapter will go on to examine the role of the fathers of single mothers and the fathers of the children of single mothers. These men appear in the narratives as gender enforcers and as authority figures, as well as providing emotional support, though, more generally, as being distant from the everyday working of family life.

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The ways in which the fathers of the children of young single mothers are constructed makes it difficult to see if they are positioned as family members for the women. I argue that they are constructed as necessary for their children's wellbeing but also as having choices about whether or not to participate in their children's lives. This chapter also presents some talk about marriage and argues that marriage is no longer positioned as a necessary response to out of wedlock pregnancy.

7.1 Family support

This first section of this chapter will present some of the ways in which family was constructed as a support to the young single mother in the absence of a husband and also in relation to biological relatedness to the child. The arrival of a child to an unmarried woman was constructed as a matter for the extended family in these interviews. As Brannen et al. (2004) found, in her study of transmission of care in the UK, families engage in practices of everyday transmission of care, which maintains the social and economic status of the family as a whole. In this study, the transmission of care was narrated as 'the kind of family we are' in many circumstances. In the first extract, presented in this chapter, Cait is talking about a daughter who is not present at the interview, but who spent some time in a mother and baby home under the care of social workers when she was a pregnant teenager.

Extract 25 (*f4 group A 135-141*)

- | | | |
|---|--------------|---|
| 1 | Cait: | I remember getting the phone call from her [Cait's daughter] like and (.) |
| 2 | | this was before Siobhan was born and she says 'I won't be bringing her |
| 3 | | home' (.) I said 'look we can talk about this' (.) but the pressure had |
| 4 | | already been put on inside |

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- 5 **Lisa:** ok
- 6 **Cait:** that this was the decision to do (.) and I said 'there's enough of us there
- 7 (.) there is no problem' I said (.) 'we (.) it can be done and the decision can
- 8 be made afterwards' plus possibly me did not want to see a grandchild
- 9 **Lisa:** mm
- 10 **Cait:** being adopted when there was enough of us there (.) there was my sister
- 11 was there was (.) there was loads of people there

Cait sets up a difference of approach between the social workers who were managing her daughter's pregnancy and living arrangements and herself. She takes up a position as a member of a close knit group who will care for her daughter. In narrating this story, she presents herself as persuading her daughter 'look can we talk about this' (lines 3, 4) to return to the family. This is contrasted with the outside authority of the social workers 'but the pressure had been put on inside' (line 4). She argues that the extended family was available for support if she kept the child - 'there's enough of us there (.) there is no problem' (lines 6, 7, 11). This indicates a definition of family that is encompassing of all adult members of her own nuclear family. She also adds 'my sister was there' (line 10,11).

Cait also utilises the importance of biological relatedness to the child 'did not want to see a grandchild [...] being adopted' (lines 9-11). However, she also works to distance herself from, and to counter, any potential suggestion that she would have allowed a grandchild to be adopted and any possibility that she would not support her daughter in raising a child. Family and relatedness are mobilised as a way of constructing a family that cares for its

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own members. The baby was not just a problem or a difficulty. It was a 'grandchild' who belonged with the family and not as part of another family through adoption.

In the next extract, Rosemary makes a similar argument about her daughter being in need of family care.

Extract 26 (*f5 D 182-185*)

- 12 **Rosemary:** when we found out (.) about how (.) about how she was living (.) Daddy
13 said 'pack your suitcase and get on the plane' (.) and that's how she came
14 back to us (.) 'and we'll look after you' (.) I birthed Luke (.) I was (.) the
15 birth partner so I cut the cord (.) I was the first person to touch him (.) you
16 know

Rosemary works to construct a version of her family as a welcoming place that provides paternal protection: 'Daddy said "Pack your suitcase and get on the plane"' (line 14) and care 'we'll look after you' (line 15). It isn't clear if the use of the phrase 'how she was living' (line 13) positions her daughter as being in a place which was unsuitable or if she was in impoverished circumstances, but the sense of the narrative conveys that her proper place at that time was with her family.

In the next extract, Tara, the granddaughter in Family 3, talks about parental support when her son was born and she was living at home.

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Extract 27 (f3 GD 103-105)

- 17 **Tara:** and when he was born they (.) I was here for the first year until (.) because
18 I met Cathal when Fionn was about one (.) but (.) and I was living here like
19 (.) and they were (.) you know mum would do night feeds and em

In Tara's account, family is positioned as an alternative support to her partner Cathal - 'I met Cathal when Fionn was about one' (line 18). Her mother in this account is positioned as a stand in helper with the baby, in much the same way as was identified by Gee and Rhodes (2003) in their study with African American teenage mothers, who benefitted from family support networks. In the next extract, Erin talks about her mother's support when her child was born.

Extract 28 (f6 group A 115-125)

- 20 **Erin:** I don't remember anybody being there of the same age as me I mean (.)
21 15 was very young (.) and I was stopped going to school (.) wasn't I (.) but
22 my mum and dad then decided to convert the attic (.) and so everything
23 was really getting ready for the baby (.) so I had huge support (.) but from
24 the (.) I suppose (.) from the community outside there was a lot of
25 judgement and there was like (.) sure she'll never be able to mind the child
26 and she won't be able to do this and that (.) but at the end of the day (.) I
27 knew that I would be able to (.) you know (.) so I remember going to the
28 hospital anyway to have the baby (.) which was (.) no one was allowed in
29 with me (.) so because I suppose we were seen as kids (.) so they said (.)
30 my mum could come in with me (.) and she came in held my hand

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In this extract, Erín takes up a number of subject positions in quick supersession. She is someone who was 'stopped going to school' (line 23); who was unusual because she was so young 'I don't remember anybody being there of the same age as me' (line 22), and who was subject to the authority of the hospital 'no one was allowed in with me' (line 32). Here, the partner is present but his presence is either quite slight or not sufficient - 'I suppose we were seen as kids' (lines 32, 33). This use of the term 'we' is the only indication that he was present at all.

However, the context of the narrative is one in which it is taken for granted, by Erín and the hospital, that what she really needed was support from her mother - 'so they said my mum could come in with me' (line 33) because the couple were young - 'I suppose we were seen as kids' (lines 32, 33).

The mother is thus presented in this context as an emotional support in a time of need - 'and she came in and held my hand' (line 34).

In these extracts, as well as being substitutes for husbands and partners, mothers of women having babies are also worked up as necessary to the woman in her time of need. In Rosemary's narrative, in Extract 26, she says 'I birthed Luke (.) I was (.) the birth partner so I cut the cord (.) I was the first person to touch him' (lines 15, 16). Erin argues in Extract 28 that during the labour, due to her age 'my mum could come in with me (.) and she came in held my hand' (lines 31, 32) and in Extract 27 when Tara emphasises the help at home - 'Mum would do night feeds' (line 19). In these examples, the partner is either absent or potentially deficient, and is, subsequently, replaced by the mother. This seems to imply a continuity of care of mothers to daughters that is taken up as welcome and necessary.

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Help and support was also constructed as a whole family matter, as in Cait's claim 'there's enough of us here (lines 7, 11) and when Erin says in her narrative 'my mum and dad then decided to convert the attic (.) and so it was everything was really getting ready for the baby (.) so I had huge support' (lines 22-24). Family support in these extracts, then, encompasses family care giving (Brannen, et al., 2004), grandmothers as care givers (Gee and Rhodes, 2003), and parents as facilitators of care and providers of practical and emotional support. The talk also draws on discourses of kinship and extended family support.

This last extract in this section identifies another issue for the family that is explored further in the next section, the response of the community. As Erin puts it 'I suppose (.) from the community outside there was a lot of judgement' (lines 24, 25). In these extracts, families are constructed as pulling together to support their daughters in the face of trouble related to the identities of families.

The extracts presented in this section concerned the pregnancies of women from the daughter and granddaughter generation and represent one kind of response to out of wedlock pregnancy that the women talked about. They represent a whole family response, which suggests that the arrival of a child to an unmarried woman is a problem that requires a solution: a solution requiring a rallying of family resources. The women present narratives of connectedness and collaboration with extended family groups.

In this first section, the solution to the collective problem of an out of wedlock pregnancy was constructed as one of family care and support, with the replacement of the assumed support that should have been provided by an absent or potentially deficient partner. There were other responses that did not include supporting the woman at home, but

instead were focused on ensuring that the woman regularised the absence of a partner by marrying. Some of these will be presented in the next section.

7.2 Surveillance and secrecy: protecting the family

As was discussed in Chapter 2, Foucault (1977) used Bentham's Panopticon as a metaphor for social surveillance. Scheff (1988) argues that surveillance is utilised to elicit shame in response to the reaction of imagined others, which in turn leads to attempts at secrecy and invisibility. This section will examine talk that concerns family reputation and its management. This next extract is from Kate, the grandmother from Family 6. In it, she talks about becoming pregnant whilst unmarried. She begins by relating her mother's reaction but then continues her narrative by talking about strategies that were utilised to avoid public scrutiny.

Extract 29 (f6 group A 3-12)

- 1 **Kate:** Well to me it was the ultimate crime you committed when you got
2 pregnant (.) I was 18 (.) so em it was all hidden for a while (.) my mother
3 was very annoyed nobody was to be told (.) I had to get married and get
4 out of town (.) and so you know (.) you went along with that (.) I didn't
5 want to get married (.) so then the baby was born and she [Kate's mother]
6 came to see it and that was lovely (.) I wanted to come home then at
7 Christmas (.) I wasn't allowed because the baby wasn't due until January
8 according to the marriage cert (.) so I came in March (.) but she always
9 had two birthdays (.) there was one in October and one in December (.)
10 and when anyone came to see her then (.) she had to be asleep because
11 she was too cute (.) she was 6 months instead of 2

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Kate refers to pregnancy as being 'the ultimate crime' (line 1), the same term that was used by Guilbride (2004), who claimed that becoming pregnant outside of marriage in post-independence Ireland was perceived to be as serious as a criminal act because it disgraced the woman, her family, her community, and her nation. Kate's narrative has a clear structure that begins with the pregnancy and how it was hidden, and ends with the strategies that were utilised to maintain the impression that the child had been conceived within marriage.

The pregnancy of a single mother is, not just negotiated as a problem, but a problem that is positioned as causing unhappiness, fear, and discomfort as a result of imagined criticism and damage to family reputation. As Edwards (2005) has argued in his work, emotion talk in these extracts is used to account for actions and to establish blame.

In Extract 29, Kate's emotional reactions are described - 'my mother was very annoyed' (lines 2, 3) - to account for her marriage against her wishes, 'I didn't want to get married' (line 5). Her mother being very annoyed also hints at her feelings of isolation from her family, 'I wasn't allowed to come home' (lines 7, 8), which accounts for her reaction to her mother's visit: 'the baby was born and she came to see it' (line 6). Being outside of or away from the family is therefore potentially constructed as lonely in this narrative. Emotion talk in this extract is also used to account for the strength of social pressure and censure that was anticipated, though not explicitly talked about, in relation to out of wedlock pregnancy; 'It was all hidden for a while' (line 2), 'nobody was to be told' (line 3). The need for secrecy to avoid surveillance, which leads to shame, is therefore of greater importance than Kate's

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own feelings on the matter, in this narrative. Kate's narrative argues for the necessity of a richly complex set of strategies in the face of imagined surveillance; 'It was all hidden for a while' (line 2). She works up a version of the secrecy and silence which appears to be a direct result of imagined condemnation, though she does not make this explicit. The story then is one of attempting to evade surveillance by keeping the matter secret - 'nobody was to be told' (line 3). This story is told along with the steps she identifies as being taken to avoid surveillance or imagined surveillance, 'I had to get married and get out of town' (lines 3, 4), and maintain the secret over time, 'she always had two birthdays' (line 9) or had to be asleep when anyone visited the house (lines 11,12). In order to maintain the family reputation, then, Kate needed to remove herself, or be removed from her family and from the community in which she lived. Family respectability was maintained, in this account, by ensuring that her out of wedlock conception was kept secret, even to the extent of hiding the age of the child.

The next extract is also about an imposed secrecy. Whilst Kate argued that her mother managed the secrecy surrounding her pregnancy, the family in Extract 30 talk about secrecy demanded by institution; in this case the school and CURA.³

Cait is the grandmother, Marie is the daughter (and a sister of Bridget who is not present but is being talked about), and Sarah is the granddaughter. In this discussion, Cait is talking about a mother and baby unit in which her daughter was housed whilst pregnant.

³ CURA – *Crisis or Unplanned Pregnancy Support and Counselling* is a nationwide support organisation funded by the Irish government but under the auspices of the Catholic Church

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Extract 30 (f4 group B 124-127)

- 1 **Cait:** that's when (.) that's when the problems were made (.) when Bridget
2 went (.) she went into CURA for a long time and it was only
3 **Marie:** twas it was as soon as she started showing cause I remember her telling
4 me
5 **Cait:** she wouldn't be allowed in school
6 **Marie:** she was not allowed back into school as soon as she started to show
7 **Cait:** yep
8 **Marie:** that she was pregnant they didn't (.) apparently it was a bad influence on
9 the rest
10 **Cait:** mhm
11 **Marie:** of the girls going there so
12 **Cait:** but em
13 **Sarah:** sure like all the other girls don't have to look at her
14 **Marie:** haha
15 **Sarah:** they don't have to say 'oh she's pregnant we'll go and get pregnant'

This extract is a beautiful example of the kinds of collaboration that can be used by families when they are working up versions of events, jointly. I will return to this aspect of the data in Chapter 8. However, in this chapter, this extract is presented as an example of the ways in which the women talk about the surveillance of the 'authorities' that were discussed in Chapter 2; in this case, CURA⁴, an agency of the Catholic Bishop's council, who provide support for 'anyone dealing with an unplanned, crisis pregnancy' and the school

⁴ <http://www.catholicbishops.ie/cura/>

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authorities. In Extract 30, the women argue that these authorities worked to make Bridget invisible while she was pregnant. The story locates Bridget's entry into CURA to the point when there was visible signs of her pregnancy - 'twas it was as soon as she started showing' (line 3), 'she wouldn't be allowed in school as soon as she started to show' (line 4). These two statements taken together, work up a version of events in which Bridget (and the fact that she was pregnant) was hidden. This discussion has much in common with the literature I discussed in Chapter 3, relating to the need for 'fallen women' to be separated, from those who were regarded as respectable, by incarceration in Magdalene laundries and mother and baby homes. It is interesting that the family do not implicate themselves in *sending* Bridget to the mother and baby home. There is no clear attribution of why she went to CURA, 'that's when the problems were made (.) when Bridget went (.) she went into CURA' (lines 1-2). This raises a number of questions about how this happened, which cannot be answered from the interviews. However, it is clear that at the time of the interviews, the decision to keep Bridget hidden during her pregnancy was positioned as one that caused problems (line 1).

The family in this extract collaborate to resist the idea that Bridget needed to be kept out of sight, 'apparently it was a bad influence on the rest [...] of the girls' (lines 7-10). The use of the word 'apparently' signals a resistance to this idea, which is taken up by Sarah and to which Marie signals her assent by her laughter at Sarah's comment, 'sure like all the other girls don't have to look at her [...] they don't have to say 'oh she's pregnant we'll go and get pregnant' (lines 12-14).

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The next extract illustrates an example of a narrative about the imagined gaze during pregnancy. Tara, the granddaughter in Family 2, positions herself as avoiding surveillance when she was pregnant to save her parents from embarrassment.

Extract 31 (*f2 Gd 138-153*)

- 1 **Lisa:** so people weren't unkind to you or anything
- 2 **Tara:** oh god no (.) no
- 3 **Lisa:** no
- 4 **Tara:** no I never (.) well (.) not to my face anyway (.) no (.) no (.) nooo (.) not in
- 5 the slightest
- 6 **Lisa:** And yet you were afraid to go into town (.) or you didn't wanta (.) be seen
- 7 out
- 8 **Tara:** ya (.) no (.) I didn't want (.) the parents tried to get me in at Christmas
- 9 time I remember (.) to do Christmas shopping (.) as we did every year and
- 10 it was like a (.) tradition every Christmas Eve (.) even Dad came down and
- 11 (laughs) when dad puts his like (.) tries to talk to us you know (.) and really
- 12 trying (.) but no (.) I wasn't (.) I was not going in
- 13 **Lisa:** ok
- 14 **Tara:** I didn't want to embarrass them either (.) because you kind of think like
- 15 (.) cause they're not (.) bad parents (.) and they didn't bring me up wrong
- 16 (.) I was just a wild child
- 17 **Lisa:** ok
- 18 **Tara:** definitely

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Tara imagines what people might say about her using the phrase ‘not to my face anyway’ (line 4). This phrase ‘not to my face’ was used again and again across the data to indicate the imagined criticism of out of wedlock pregnancy and child bearing. The panopticon of feared social judgement in this instance is argued by Tara to account for her story of staying out of sight of the community. This imagined gaze appears to have been a consequence of fear of stigmatisation and loss of status for the women and their families. Earner-Byrne (2008) suggested that the pregnancy of one woman in a family had, historically, consequences for all women in the family. She argues that perceived lack of chastity could potentially damage the reputation and, subsequently, the marriage prospects of all women in the family. This level of shared concern for the reputation of women in the family did not appear anywhere in these interviews. However, Tara’s account does construct a potential threat to her parents’ reputation as parents ‘because they’re not (.) bad parents (.) and they didn’t bring me up wrong’ (lines 15, 16).

In addition, Tara’s account has much in common with representations of teenage pregnancy in developmental psychology books, described in Chapter 2 as a sign of bad parenting (Schaffer, 1996). In accounting for her story of making herself invisible during her pregnancy, Tara positions herself as protecting her parents, ‘I didn’t want to embarrass them either’ (line 14) from unwelcome scrutiny, to shield them from the imagined criticism that they might be ‘bad parents’ (line 15). She explicitly counters this potential suggestion, ‘and they didn’t bring me up wrong’ (line 15). To argue this, she takes up the subject position of ‘wild child’ (line 16) as an account for her pregnancy.

The construction of out of wedlock pregnancy as a poor reflection on parents and the talk of imagined surveillance and criticism were echoed in the following extract from Julie, the

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daughter in Family 1. In this case, Julie talks about her father's reaction to her becoming pregnant a short time after her sister had also become pregnant whilst unmarried.

Extract 32 (f1 D 30-35)

- 1 **Lisa:** how did other people react
- 2 **Julie:** well ya see they'd never say it to my face (.) my father was extremely
- 3 disappointed, (.) very very disappointed (.) because my sister had just
- 4 come home three months previous to that and told him she was pregnant
- 5 too (.) he had four girls he was the proudest father in town (.) cos all the
- 6 girls were getting pregnant (.) but his four girls weren't (.) and then his
- 7 two youngest came home and said 'we're pregnant' (.) within a couple of
- 8 months of each other

Out of wedlock pregnancy is constructed as a disappointment (line 3) to Julie's father. His disappointment is contrasted with him being 'the proudest father in town' (line 5) because 'all the girls were getting pregnant but his four girls weren't' (lines 6, 7). Clearly, then, the surveillance of the community within a panopticon of imagined gaze, is presented as affecting the social standing of the father. This way of constructing disappointment for the father of the woman was another way in which fathers were worked up as family members.

7.3 Men: fathers of women, fathers of children

The particular role of fathers in the out of wedlock pregnancies of their daughters and in the lives of the children that they father to women, to whom they are or were not married, will be explored in more detail in this section. The term 'putative' is often used to refer to

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the fathers of the children of unmarried women to mean that the man is claimed or assumed to be the father. Fink (2000) argues that the use of the word 'putative' emerged from legal terminology and served the function of introducing doubt about whether or not the man actually was the father of the child. This in turn allowed men to avoid responsibility for children and reflected on the mother's character and morality. Not only had she had a child outside of marriage, but she was unable to legally name the father. Furthermore, as this is social constructionist research, I am not concerned with the truth or otherwise of what the participants tell me. All of the talk is regarded as a construction of some kind. So, my interest is in how the talk is constructed, rather than whether or not it is accurate. For these reasons, I will continue to use the phrase, fathers of the children of single mothers, even though it is a little long and awkward.

The role of fathers in families is discussed in Chapter 4. During recruitment for participants, a number of people asked why fathers were not included in the focus of inquiry and pool of research informants. As was argued in Chapter 5, the method chapter, men as fathers of young single mothers and as fathers of the children of young single mothers, impact substantially on the lives of young single mothers and their children and are indeed worthy of investigation in their own right. Indeed, they are frequently made invisible in constructions of single motherhood. Their relevance in terms of this thesis, however, is in relation to the ways in which they are constructed in the talk of the women who were interviewed. Men have already been constructed in a variety of ways in some of the narratives of the women that have been presented in the empirical sections so far. This section of the chapter will examine some of these constructions in more detail.

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In Extract 32, in the previous section, Julie's father is positioned as 'the proudest father in town' (line 5) because his daughters were not like an imagined, 'all the girls' (line 5) who were getting pregnant whilst 'his 4 weren't' (line 6). The interview continued as follows:

Extract 33 (f1 D 35-40)

- 1 **Julie:** when my sister and her boyfriend approached Dad and said it to (.) my
2 Dad em (.) he took down the calendar and said (.) that's the date you're
3 getting married (.) and basically forced them to get married before the
4 baby was born (.) em I didn't want that type of pressure on me (.) so I left
5 (.) I moved out (.) I got a flat (.) I didn't tell them I was moving I just left

In this account, Julie positions her father as an authority figure who can compel the couple to marry: 'he took down the calendar and said (.) that's the date you're getting married' (lines 2, 3) 'and basically forced them to get married' (line 3). The date that she says her father chose was 'before the baby was born' (lines 3, 4). Since this is contrasted with his pride in relation to none of his daughters being pregnant outside of marriage, this appears, as in Kate's account, to be a strategy to avoid imagined criticism from others in the community, though it may also be attributable to a concern for the needs and welfare of his daughter and grandchild. In addition, this appears to relate to the findings that fathers are constructed as gender enforcers and restorers of order (Nentwich, 2008) in talk of couples. The father in this narrative forces the couple to marry and follow the expected gender roles of people who have children.

Julie describes avoiding a direct confrontation with this paternal authority by removing herself from any discussion with him, 'so I left (.) I moved out (.) I got a flat (.) I didn't tell them I was moving I just left' (lines 4, 5), in order to avoid this 'pressure' (line 4). So, whilst

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she narrates a story of his two youngest who came home and said 'we're pregnant' (lines 7, 8) in Extract 32, in telling her own story, she seems to have avoided saying this directly to him, herself. This avoidance of direct statements about some pregnancies and avoiding confrontation with the possibility of negative affect was an important aspect of narratives about communicating pregnancy news. This will be examined further in Chapter 8.

Disappointment on the part of fathers was also presented as being expressed by silence. Tara's account in the next extract is of her father's silence.

Extract 34 (*f2 gd 93-103*)

- 1 **Tara:** Dad was really quiet with me I remember (.) didn't even talk to me and he
2 didn't get angry (.) he just had to process it himself (.) whereas you
3 know(.) ehm (.) no (.) once (.) once I was three months pregnant and we
4 went with the scan stuff(.) they were 'it's happening (.) it's life' (.) and em
5 (.) they were brilliant
- 6 **Lisa:** ok
- 7 **Tara:** you know (.) because (.) I remember crying (.) 'no one's going to want me
8 now because I am pregnant and (laughing softly)
- 9 **Lisa:** really
- 10 **Tara:** yeah (.) I think my mind was like (.) I am never ever going to have a
11 boyfriend (.)and you know (.) I won't get married or any of that (.) and I
12 remember dad (.) bless him (.) because you know (.) set in their ways
13 (.)and he was like 'you will (.) don't worry (.) everything is going to be fine'
14 like (.) that was coming from dad and that was a lot like

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Tara uses talk of her father's silence, 'Dad was really quiet with me' (line 1) to demonstrate the depth of emotional feeling that hearing of her pregnancy had on him. She says he 'didn't even talk to me' (line 1). The narrative of negative affect being communicated is immediately recognisable, as a form of communication using silence. Tara juxtaposes 'he didn't get angry' (line 2) with an explanation of his later acceptance (lines 3-5) using a psychological discourse, 'he just had to process it himself' (line 2). As in Julie's account above, her father is positioned as someone who is impacted by his daughter's pregnancy.

However, Tara's father is also constructed as being kind. She relates negative affect in relation to her own pregnancy, 'I remember crying' (line 7) and fears of having spoiled her chances of marriage, 'I am never ever going to have a boyfriend (.) and you know (.) I won't get married or any of that' (lines 7, 8). In Tara's account, her father offers reassurance, 'don't worry (.) everything is going to be fine' (lines 13, 14) for which she is grateful 'bless him' (line 12). In addition, she assumes disappointment on her father's part and accounts for it 'because you know (.) set in their ways' (line 12). For this reason, she appreciates his support, 'coming from dad that was a lot' (line 14). This last line also hints at the construction of Tara's father as an authority figure or perhaps someone who is usually less inclined to become involved in the emotional labour of taking care of his daughter.

The accounts from Julie and Tara fit with previous findings on gender differences in parental reactions to their children's non-marital pregnancies identified by Hyde (1997), who found that pregnancies were regarded as a cause of embarrassment for fathers. Tara's story also supports Hyde's (1999) contention that women who remain in the family home, are able to renegotiate paternal authority. This offers another insight into the possible

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meaning of 'coming from dad that was a lot' (line 14). It could indicate a more accepting and less authoritative stance than before she became pregnant.

In other interviews, fathers of women who were single and pregnant were constructed as not being informed about the pregnancy at all. In the next two extracts, the grandmothers from Families 6 and 2, Kate and Mags, talk about this.

Extract 35 (f6 group A 12-14)

- 1 **Kate:** my father never knew I was pregnant (.) he was never told (.) so but I
2 mean after years (.) sure he didn't know what birthdays we had

Extract 36 (f2 G 219-228)

- 1 **Mags:** you couldn't tell the husband until you had everything sorted
2 **Lisa:** really
3 **Mags:** yeah(.) yeah (.) you couldn't (.)and you see that's the Irishman again (.)
4 you couldn't tell the husband (.) But you see if it happened to Mary down
5 the road(.) that was alright(.) they would accept that(.) but not in their
6 own house (.) but that is the (.) I would say the modern day Irishman is
7 different

Kate argues 'my father never knew I was pregnant (.) he was never told' (line 1) 'you couldn't' (line 3). Mags says something similar, 'you couldn't tell the husband until you had everything sorted'. These claims are accounted for in slightly different ways. For Kate, this was due to her father's general detachment from the minutiae of family life, 'sure he didn't know what birthdays we had' (line 2), whilst in Mags' account it was best to keep silent, 'until you had everything sorted' (line 3) because it would not be accepted 'in their own

house' (line 7). In both of these narratives, the fallout from the pregnancy was a matter for the pregnant woman's mother to manage. Mothers then are constructed as the managers of family affairs in this instance (Sunderland, 2000) and fathers as detached from the detail of everyday life.

The remainder of this section will present some of the talk of the women about the fathers of the children of single mothers. As I discussed in Chapter 4, Hyde (1999) found that the fathers of single mothers were often not considered part of the family, in her study of Irish women. However, I have asked a research question about how families are constructed and therefore it is relevant to examine whether the women in my study constructed the fathers of their children as family members and if so in what way.

One of the ways in which the fathers of the children of young single mothers were constructed in the talk of the research participants was in relation to discourses of paternal responsibility. When in the first group interview with Family 5, I asked what single motherhood meant to them. Even though my question was about this meaning of single motherhood, Marie, related this question to the father of the child of the single mother:

Extract 37 (f5 group A 9-11)

- 1 **Lisa:** What does single motherhood mean (.) for you
- 2 **Marie:** he took for the hills haha (.) he ran out (.) he's gone good luck haha

As this interjection was jocular in nature, it might suggest that lack of paternal involvement is not necessarily positioned as a serious breach of social responsibility in this account. Another possibility is that laughter is a way of dealing with difficult issues. This point is

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further illustrated by Extracts 38, 39, and 40. The first two extracts are with Cait , the grandmother in Family 4, and the third is with Annie, the grandmother in Family 3.

Extract 38 (*f4 Group A 11-13*)

- 1 **Cait:** I see a single mother being on her own (.) possibly a father or partner in
2 the background but not involved
3 **Lisa:** ok
4 **Cait:** or not wanting to be involved

Extract 39 (*f4 G 5-13*)

- 1 **Cait:** ohh I was (.) because em (.) that time you didn't know how a fella was
2 going to take it like
3 **Lisa:** ok
4 **Cait:** em yes we were going together for a long time (.) I had known him since
5 I was about fourteen
6 **Lisa:** right
7 **Cait:** fifteen we had an (.) on off relationship (.) for a long time but I still didn't
8 know how he'd react
9 **Lisa:** ok
10 **Cait:** no that was my one fear (.) em
11 **Lisa:** what were you afraid of
12 **Cait:** rejection
13 **Lisa:** ok
14 **Cait:** being left on my own

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- 15 **Lisa:** aha
- 16 **Cait:** em cause my dad was dead at this stage like and (.) my dad I was closer
- 17 to my dad than I was to my mother

Extract 40 (*f3 G 32-35*)

- 1 **Annie:** no no he was very good (.) we went and got married then (.) so Dad wasn't
- 2 going to the wedding (.) he wasn't having anything (.) to do with the
- 3 wedding (.) he wasn't giving me away (.) the pressure (.) dyknow it was all
- 4 pressure
- 5 **Lisa:** mhm
- 6 **Annie:** so in the end he came anyway so (.) it was grand (.) but it was hard (.) very
- 7 hard (.) very hard times I think

In Extract 39, Cait describes 'my one fear' (line 10) of 'rejection' (line 12) and 'being left on my own' (line 14). In Extract 40, Annie positions her husband as 'he was very good' (line 1) because he married her. These two women are describing a time in Irish social history, as discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, when there were no social welfare payments for women who had children outside of marriage, when illegitimacy was still stigmatised and when women who became pregnant outside of marriage were frequently institutionalised. Marriage for women, who became pregnant in the 1950s and 1960s seems to have been something of a necessity. As the data in the next section will demonstrate, marriage is characterised in very different terms when it is discussed in relation to the current generation. The men in these two extracts, on the other hand, are positioned as having a

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choice, 'you didn't know how a fella was going to take it' (lines 1, 2). These women argue that they were relieved that their husbands were prepared to marry them.

I want to return briefly to the fathers of the women who were pregnant, because they also appear in these extracts. As in the extracts earlier in the chapter, Annie positions her father as an authority figure and enforcer who initially at least, was planning to boycott her wedding: 'he wasn't having anything (.) to do with the wedding (.) he wasn't giving me away' (lines 2, 3). As the narrative progresses, he relents 'so in the end he came anyway so (.) it was grand'.

In Cait's account in Extract 39, her father is positioned as someone who, had he had lived, might have supported her had she been rejected by her husband. She accounts for her fear that the father of her child might not marry her by saying 'em cause my dad was dead at this stage like and (.) my dad I was closer to my dad than I was to my mother', indicating that imagined support from her father would have been forthcoming in the event of 'being left on my own' arisen. As in the previous extracts about fathers of single mothers, in these narratives they appear as enforcers and as potential sources of emotional support and closeness.

Returning to the fathers of single mothers, and talk of reasonability, the following extract talks about financial responsibility. Carly is the granddaughter in Family 7.

Extract 41 (f7 group B 581-588)

- 1 **Carly:** I'm getting just a bit more than what his father is on social welfare (.) what
- 2 he's getting (.) but all of my money goes towards stuff for Sam (.) why
- 3 doesn't all his money have to go for things for Sam(.) like I know I'm

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4 getting paid as a single mother to support my son but everything I'm
5 getting (.) I'm getting groceries and I'm paying for a course to get back
6 into work (.) I'm doing that to get a job to support my son (.) why does
7 every penny I have has to be accounted for in a way that it's doing
8 something for Sam when none of his have to unless he's in a good mood
9 that week and he's like (.) 'OK, I'm going to give you money this week'

Carly argues that she makes greater financial sacrifices than her son's father. In this narrative, her welfare payment is designed to help her support her son, Sam; 'I know I'm getting paid as a single mother to support my son' (line 3). However, she also argues that financial commitment is uneven, 'I'm getting groceries and I'm paying for part to get back into work (.) I'm doing that to get a job to support my son' (lines 4, 5). She argues that there is a disparity in responsibility: 'I'm getting just a bit more than what his father is on social welfare' (line 1), 'all of my money goes towards stuff for Sam' (Line 2). In addition, the optional nature of his contribution is noted, 'unless he's in a good mood that week and he's like (.) 'OK, I'm going to give you money this week' (lines 8,9). Carly asks, rhetorically, 'why doesn't all his money have to go for things for Sam' (lines 2,3), 'why does every penny I have has to be accounted for in a way that it's doing something for Sam when none of his have to' (line 5,6). Unlike Annie, in Extract 40, Carly does not describe his contribution as making him 'very good', but rather contrasts it with her own greater contribution. Whilst doing this, she is also comparing demonstrating her own good mothering and personal sacrifice (Sunderland, 2000).

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Although fathers' participation was positioned as optional in the interviews, there were a number of ways in which the need for a relationship with a father was constructed as essential for the wellbeing of children. In Extract 3, in chapter 6, one of the ways in which Carly asserted her good mothering was by arguing that she facilitated her son's relationship with his father. In this next extract, Family 2 collaborate to discuss with me the role of fathers in children's lives. I ask, rather awkwardly, about 'fathers and what is (.) should be (.) might be (.) in children's lives' and the women work up an interesting version of the role of fathers. Siobhan is the daughter, Tara is the granddaughter, and Mags is the grandmother.

Extract 42 (*f 2 group B 319-332*)

- 1 **Lisa:** one more question about one thing that came up in the first one (.) when
2 you were talking about women older single women (.) maybe just
3 deciding to have a baby on their own (.) tell me about (.) fathers and what
4 is (.) should be (.) might be (.) in children's lives
- 5 **Siobhan:** oh the father's role is very important I think (.) father figure
- 6 **Tara:** yeah they should (.) well you see I (.) fathers should wash (.) should make
7 dinners should clean
- 8 **Siobhan:** (laughs)
- 9 **Tara:** should play with the kids and em (.) I don't (.) I don't understand how (.) I
10 don't' agree with y'know you know people twenty years ago where the
11 father was just going 'I'm not doing any of that'
- 12 **Siobhan:** there's still is some of them
- 13 **Mags:** oh I know there are but they go out to work but some of the dads did it
14 years ago too

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- 15 **Tara:** did they
- 16 **Mags:** Grandad washed nappies but em (.) and he played with the kids and he
- 17 played with the toys on the floor and took care of the lads

Siobhan uses the phrase ‘father figure’ and asserts that the ‘father’s role is very important’ (line 5); ‘father figure’ seems to serve as a self-explanatory phrase: a figure of some kind that is needed for children. Tara utilises an egalitarian and progressive model of parenting partnership to emphasise the gender neutral nature of parenting activity, ‘fathers should wash (.) should make dinners (.) should clean’ (lines 6 -8) and works to present this as in opposition to the ‘people twenty years ago’ (line 10), when men had an opportunity to refuse to help, ‘I’m not doing any of that’ (line 11). There are two counter arguments in this talk. Siobhan indicates with her laughter (line 8) that she is sceptical about this as a general practice and interjects that men who choose to opt out of work in the home with children still exist (line 12). This contention is further challenged by Mags, the grandmother, who excuses men who don’t engage in such activities, ‘they go out to work’ (line 13), and says that men in the past, including her husband ‘washed nappies [and] played with the kids’ (line 16, 17).

As I will illustrate in Chapter 8, differing versions within the collaborative talk of families often intersect in the talk of the women. In this case, the differing versions cohere around a shared theme of what men ought to do and how necessary and important they are in children’s lives.

This is picked up in the next extract, in which I asked Jaqueline about ‘having a man’.

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Extract 43 (*f5 Gd 306-312*)

- 1 **Lisa:** so (.) in practical terms
- 2 **Jaqueline:** mhm
- 3 **Lisa:** having a man
- 4 **Jaqueline:** it (.) it's in practical terms I know I can do it all myself but there are things
- 5 like Luke does need a father so I encourage him and his father to talk on
- 6 the phone and Skype
- 7 **Lisa:** ok
- 8 **Jaqueline:** and he does go over and see his father and I do say to his father you know
- 9 that he really needs to identify with a man
- 10 **Lisa:** really
- 11 **Jaqueline:** of course he does (.) he's a boy he needs that identification and that
- 12 knowing there's a man there and that he does love him and that he comes
- 13 from him
- 14 **Lisa:** mhm
- 15 **Jaqueline:** you know so I try to reinforce that all the time that he has got a dad yknow
- 16 **Lisa:** yeah
- 17 **Jaqueline:** that he does love him even if he is a bit inconsistent

Jaqueline argues for the necessity of having a father (line 5), utilising the phrase, 'he really needs to identify with a man' (lines 10, 12) and in answer to my query 'really' replies 'of course he does he's a boy' (line 11, 12). Jaqueline does not need to finish this statement or elaborate further because she has made her meaning clear: boys need to identify with a father.

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Jaqueline's narrative describe the efforts she makes to facilitate her son's relationship with his father, even in advocating with her child's father, 'and I do say to his father that he needs to identify with a man' (lines 9, 10), despite his shortcomings as a father - 'even if he is a bit inconsistent'. She constructs a version in which she manages the interactions by encouraging talk on the phone and Skype (lines 6, 7) and sending him to the UK to visit (line 9) because it is imperative that her child has the benefit of 'knowing that there's a man there and that he does love him and that he comes from him' (lines 13, 14). Her good mothering in this case then, involves facilitating a relationship, even though she argues 'in practical terms I know I can do it all myself' (line 1). Jaqueline describes making a great deal of effort to ensure the emotional needs of her child met.

The discourse of the father being essential to the wellbeing of the child is picked up by the grandmother in Family 6, Kate, who is talking about her granddaughter's relationship with her father.

Extract 44 (f6 group A 175 – 184)

- | | | |
|---|--------------|---|
| 1 | Kate: | and then herself and Martin (.) her father always no matter what went on |
| 2 | | (.) between the parents (.) her father always rang her (.) I used to laugh |
| 3 | | when he used to ring (.) below at her grandmothers (.) I mean she was |
| 4 | | about a year (.) so she didn't know what was going on (.) but when he'd |
| 5 | | come back from England (.) she'd run out the door and say (.) 'my dad (.) |
| 6 | | isn't he lovely nana' and I used to be fit to burn him (.) I said 'yes (.) he's |
| 7 | | gorgeous' (.) that type of thing went on (.) but then they were back |
| 8 | | together and they left and bought a house (.) I was thrown down about a |
| 9 | | month (.) because I said (.) they are taking the baby (.) I thought they'd |

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- 10 leave her to me (.) which is mad (.) I mean she wasn't my child (.) but I was
11 quite willing to keep her (.) you have that bond with them then

In this extract, the grandmother's narrative is about the importance of facilitating a child's relationship with her father. In doing so, she is putting aside her own feelings for the child's wellbeing. Kate describes suppressing her own emotional reactions in relation to the father, 'I used to be fit to burn him' (line 6) instead agreeing with her granddaughter 'yes (.) he's gorgeous' (line 6) but also stepping aside to allow the parents to raise their child 'I mean she wasn't my child' (line 9,10). Kate describes warm maternal feelings for her grandchild in this account 'you have that bond with them' (lines 10, 11) to the point that it caused her pain when the child moved out, 'I was thrown down about a month' (line 8). In common with research discussed in Chapter 4 (Gee and Rhodes, 2003), this grandmother takes up a position as a buffer and temporary substitute for the father, who must stand aside upon his return to the child's life.

The data presented in this section has identified a number of ways of talking about fathers and their roles in the lives of single mothers. Fathers of single mothers were identified as having a stake in the social disgrace and stigmatisation of their daughters. They potentially run the risk of being positioned as bad fathers if their daughters became pregnant outside of marriage, presumably because they did not live up to the gender enforcement requirements of fatherhood (Nentwich, 2008). In addition to being presented as authority figures in some narratives, they were also constructed as a source of practical and emotional support for their pregnant daughters.

Fathers of the children of single mothers are presented as having an option whether or not to be in their children's lives and in relation to financial responsibility. In addition, fathers of children are also constructed as necessary for the emotional wellbeing of children, in particular, boys. Relationships with fathers of children are constructed as being facilitated and encouraged in this regard by mothers and grandmothers. The fathers of young single mothers were not positioned as requesting or demanding access to their children and the women did not seem to allocate any role to them in relation to themselves, in terms of emotional support or sharing responsibility for choice in relation to the child. Fathers in this situation seemed at once to be visible and invisible in the talk of the women.

7.4 Changing family forms: the case of marriage

The previous section examined some of the ways in which men as fathers and husbands were constructed in relation to responses to their daughters' pregnancies and the ways in which mothers and grandmothers positioned the importance of fathers in the lives of their children. There was talk of men who were 'very good' in marrying a pregnant woman, men who 'took to the hills', and men who were instructed to marry by a woman's father. Marriage was presented as a solution to the trouble caused by out of wedlock pregnancy.

In this section, I will look at an important site of change over time in relation to marriage that was worked up in the talk of the women. This first extract is from Mags, the grandmother in Family 2. In it, she talks about social expectations and material conditions at the time that she got married, as well as some of the consequences for relationship negotiations among extended families.

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Extract 45 (*G f2 142-49*)

- 1 Mags: they resented (.) they resented the daughter in law in the house you see
2 (.) because everybody went in with (.) you married in (.) you married into
3 a place my dear
4 Lisa: yes
5 Mags: yes (.) you married in and you married well (.) you weren't being forced
6 onto the side of the road or anything else

Mags talks of 'being forced onto the side of the road' (line 5) to emphasise the necessity of marriage when she was younger. As discussed in Chapter 3, women in Irish society were historically positioned primarily in relation to their role as mothers, and the bar on women working in certain jobs was not lifted until 1973. Nauck and Suckow (2006) differentiate between descendent and affinal kinship systems and examined how this relates to marriage and family relationships across a range of cultures. Descendent systems are based on inheritance, resulting in greater family involvement than in affinal systems which are based on choice and romantic love. As Kennedy (2001) argues, Ireland has made a rapid transition from an agrarian farming based economy to a service and tourism based one in recent decades. This change is reflected in the patterns of marriage that the different generations describe. Mags was married in the early 1960s in rural Ireland. Marriage precipitated the need to negotiate living arrangements - 'you married in and you married well' (line 5) with people who may not be welcoming: 'they resented the daughter in law in the house' (line 1). She argues that marriage was necessary in order to have somewhere to live but also as a form of social accomplishment, 'you married in and you married well' (line 5).

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In this next extract, the same grandmother, Mags, is talking with her daughter Siobhan and me about marriage in the context of an out of wedlock pregnancy. However, in the context of the present day, she does not position marriage as an accomplishment.

Extract 46 (*f2 group A 84-91*)

- | | | |
|----|-----------------|--|
| 1 | Mags: | there isn't the stigma there was y'know the stigma is gone |
| 2 | Siobhan: | yeah |
| 3 | Mags: | you're not forced into wedlock now (.) that's the difference people were |
| 4 | | forced y'know |
| 5 | Siobhan: | mhm |
| 6 | Mags: | you just had to and that was it |
| 7 | Lisa: | shotgun weddings |
| 8 | Siobhan: | shotgun weddings exactly |
| 9 | Mags: | well I mean it was a common thing to hear women marry or get rid |
| 10 | Siobhan: | sure you had to (.) get married |

Both Siobhan and I build on Mags' construction of people being forced into marriage in the past because of social stigma, 'you just had to and that was it' (line 6). I supply the phrase 'shotgun weddings' (line 7) and Siobhan responds with 'shotgun weddings exactly' (line 7). As discussed in Chapter 3, the introduction of the 'unmarried mother's allowance' in 1973, offered some financial independence to women who had children outside of marriage. It was argued by women of all generations that whilst the imperative to marry was once a social and economic necessity, things had changed and marriage was now something that could be chosen irrespective of whether or not a couple had a child together.

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However, none of the women explicitly identified welfare payments as relevant to the decline in the need for women with children to marry. This is interesting in light of the discourses that were identified in the previous chapter, which blamed neo-liberal failure mothers for actively seeking a welfare payment. It points up an ideological dilemma in the talk. On the one hand, the women argued that it is good that people are no longer forced to marry, but on the other they argued that it is bad to be reliant on welfare. This dilemma was not alluded to or resolved in the talk, which is hardly surprising given the complexity and trouble around the subject positions that were available to them. As Chapter 6 discussed, the women in this study consistently refused neoliberal failure discourses for themselves. In this context, the absence of any construction of welfare, as something useful or beneficial, might open up a space for a celebration of welfare payments that they were not prepared to make.

The next two extracts are from the daughter in Family 1, Julie, and the grandmother and daughter in Family 2, Anna and Sheila. The women are discussing with me whether or not women who are pregnant or have children outside of marriage should marry. Julie offered the following on the topic of marriage at the end of our individual interview, when I asked had she anything she would like to add.

Extract 47 (F1 D 162-163)

- 1 **Julie:** Oh gosh (.) I would advise any young girl (.) that just because you have a
- 2 baby with a man does not necessarily mean you have to get married no
- 3 matter what people say (.) you do not have to get married (.) definitely
- 4 not (.) I'm not saying to leave the man (.) see how you get on (.) it was me
- 5 and my husband (.) it was three months (.) four months when I found out

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6 I was pregnant (.) em I barely even knew him (.) I just think there's a lot of
7 young mothers out there that stay with their partners just for the sake of
8 the child (.) and I would advise any woman (.) do not do that (.) do not
9 stay with a man that you're not happy with to make your child happy (.)
10 because there will come the day when your child will not be happy
11 because you're unhappy (.) kids know a lot (.) they see a lot

Extract 48 (*f3 group B 103-115*)

12 **Lisa:** Do you think single mothers should get married (.) if they can
13 **Anna:** well it's like (.) I wouldn't push em to get married
14 **Sheila:** no
15 **Anna:** I definitely wouldn't push anyone to get married (.) we were pushed into
16 it (.) I wouldn't (.) I wouldn't agree with it at all no (.) I just think that
17 whatyoucallit (.) sure how could they
18 **Sheila:** like you'd be very young (.) you know like (.) at like
19 **Anna:** yeah
20 **Sheila:** at nineteen (.) at sixteen (.) seventeen like (.) that (.) they may not even
21 be together when they're twenty-something
22 **Anna:** that's right
23 **Sheila:** yeah yeah (.) no I wouldn't
24 **Anna:** no I'd never advise someone to get married just for the sake of a child (.)
25 I think that's think that's all wrong (.) I just think they need to test (.) a few
26 years and see what way things
27 **Sheila:** yeah work out and if it's for the best (.) well it won't pass em anyway (.)
28 d'know the way times are now like (.) they're so different (.) it's so hard

29 for them now really (.) to be honest with you (.) in the line of (.) having a
30 house

In the next extract, Beatrice, the daughter in Family 7 also argues that marriage should not be forced on people but also argues that there are specific ‘right reasons’ for entering into marriage.

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Extract 49 (f7 group B – 20-28)

- 1 **Beatrice:** yeah (.) forced into marriage (.) I think you should get married for the right
2 reasons (.) not because (.) like (.) just because you're together and you
3 have a child with someone and you shouldn't get married (.) because you
4 should get married (.) you should get married because you want to get
5 married (.) so it's with the right person (.) so you want to make a
6 commitment with that person (.) not because you have to (.) I do think
7 marriage is important (.) I think you should get married

Beatrice argues that here are 'right reasons' (lines 1, 2) for getting married. Like the women in the previous two extracts, she argues that having a child is not sufficient (lines 2-4) but rather that, 'you should get married because you want to get married' (lines 4, 5). She thus constructs marriage as important and something that people should do (line 7) but this should be in the context of 'the right person (.) so you want to make a commitment with that person' (lines 5, 6). This construction of marriage is something that is only done correctly on an affinal basis (Nauck and Suckow, 2006). Discourses positioning marriage as something that should be an interpersonal commitment were utilised by women across the interviews, even those who had married, for either descendent reasons or for the identified reasons of social propriety / avoiding stigma or needs of children. This appears to reflect a shift in the role of marriage, which is reflected in the statistical data discussed in Chapter 4. 36.4% of children born in 2015 were to unmarried couples. As discussed in the previous sub section, fathers are constructed as important for children in the talk of the women. However, this does not mean that a woman should marry in order to provide a child with a father (though the responsibility for managing a relationship with fathers is

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taken up by the women). Rather, marriage is constructed as a commitment that should be entered into for the 'right reasons', specifically 'because you want to' (line 5), 'it's with the right person' (line 6), or 'you want to make a commitment' (line 7).

In the next two extracts, Jaqueline, the granddaughter in Family 5 and Erín, the daughter in Family 2, construct marriage as something that they had never been interested in at all.

Extract 50 (f5 gd 50-54)

- 1 **Jaqueline:** so marriage to me (.) I I had a rebellious idea of marriage (.) and I don't
2 know whether that was coming from my mum and how (.) how she felt
3 so (.) the important parts of marriage to her (.) she clung and clung to and
4 em the sanctity of marriage and everything (.) and I had quite a rebellious
5 idea about it I just kind of thought 'well why would anybody need to get
6 married' because of what it had done to my mum you know when

Extract 51(f6 group B 96-101)

- 7 **Erín:** my mother never said anything about getting married (.) so marriage was
8 never something that (.) that wasn't even in my head (.) and I'm not
9 married today either (.) even though I'm still with the same person (.) or
10 I'm not engaged (.) and I had no need to be married no need for it, I mean
11 it's not something that's important (.) maybe in 10 years' time or
12 something (.) but it's never, for either of us, it's never been something
13 that we have wanted to do

Erín constructs marriage as something that 'wasn't even in my head' (line 8) and as something of which she 'had no need' (line 10) and 'not something that's important' (line

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11). Jaqueline, on the other hand, takes up a position of having had 'a rebellious idea of marriage' (lines 1, 4). Both women argue that their mothers were of significance in relation to this construction of marriage. In Erin's case, her mother 'never said anything about marriage' (line 7) and for Jaqueline it was a response to 'what it had done to my mum' (line 6). Across the data then, women constructed marriage in ways which reflect the changing social practices in relation to marriage and out of wedlock childbearing. As with Bjerrum Nielsen and Rudberg's (2000) intergenerational study, the women from different generations constructed rememberings of marriage that were related to the generation from which they came and the socio economic circumstances that prevailed when they married. However, the women argued that in today's world marriage should be an affinal commitment rather than a practical one.

7.5 Chapter conclusions

This chapter was focused on the question, how is family worked up in the talk of the women. The first section examined the ways in which single motherhood was not merely a matter for the single mother but also for her family. Families are constructed in terms of biological relatedness and the necessity to support a family member in a time of trouble. Family in this kind of talk, then, are constructed as close and supportive and also as intergenerational.

Families were also constructed as working together to maintain silence and secrecy from the community at large. These strategies were positioned as necessary, in light of the potential of surveillance by others. This surveillance is often imagined, rather than constructed from particular incidents of social stigmatisation or overt criticism. Indeed,

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critical talk about the women is imagined as being passed on to others rather than directed at the women in person, as indicated by the use of the phrase 'not to my face'. The trouble that arises for the family is demonstrated in the extracts in the second section of the chapter, which are concerned with the ways in which families managed surveillance of perceived surveillance. Once again, the woman's pregnancy is constructed in narratives as a matter for all of the family and one that affects family identities.

The respectability of parents as good parents was argued as having potentially been compromised when a woman in the family became pregnant whilst unmarried. Secrecy was constructed as a prelude to repair of the situation: forced marriages or women moving away from families for the two older of the generations. Within the younger generation, there was also a construction of families as having been shamed by the woman's pregnancy because it indicated a deficiency in the parenting she had received. However, in these instances, marriage was not positioned as a remedy for the situation.

Narratives about the fathers of single mothers presented them as being disappointed by their daughters' pregnancies. Fathers were also constructed as authority figures in this context, demanding marriages or calling young women home for care and support.

As I discussed in Chapter 2, some theorists have argued that in contemporary society, the nature of identities has become more fragmented and individualised (e.g. Rose, 1996; Giddens, 1991). However, these extracts show women developing narratives of continuity (Taylor and Littleton, 2003). They are bound up with their families and circumstances in their own lives, including the addition of another family member, and are circumstances that are a matter for the family as an ongoing functioning group.

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It is in relation to the fathers of the children of single mothers that this fragmentation appears. Men who were fathers of children were positioned as having choices in relation to the contribution that was required of them in terms of finance and emotional labour or indeed as to whether or not they would be involved at all. There was an ideological dilemma evident in these positions. Part of good mothering discourses for single mothers was the subject position of mother who facilitates relationships for her child, or even grandchild.

Complex sets of discourse, in relation to marriage, identified a number of changing interpretative repertoires for understanding the need or value of marriage. Marriage is no longer a precursor for respectability – in fact being able to buy a house and be educated enough to get a job are argued to be far more important. Arguments that constructed marriage as being necessary for the good of children were refuted in favour of those which positioned marriage as a choice which should be made with the ‘right person’. Discourses about marriage were applied differently, depending on whether it was in relation to future marriages or those which had happened in the past. Marriage was constructed as an essential solution to financial needs and out of wedlock pregnancy in previous generations, at times when women had limited financial independence. For the current generation, marriage was constructed as something that was not strictly necessary and as something which should be on the basis of affinal bonds, rather than to live up to social convention or for the needs of children. It is likely that this is not an unusual way of talking about marriage, since one third of children in Ireland are now born to parents who are not married (C.S.O., 2017).

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In a similar way to the women in Bjerrum Nielsen and Rudberg's (2000) study, the women in this study managed a path of access to social mobility and economic stability in line with the socioeconomic and cultural values that were relevant to the particular time in which they were of childbearing age. For some, it was necessary to marry whilst for others marriage at too young an age might prove to be a barrier to other more important tools of social advancement such as home ownership.

Family in the talk of the women, then, is constructed as united across generations. It is also argued in the talk that the woman's reputation and the reputation of her family are intimately linked. Men, as fathers of single mothers, are positioned as authority figures within the family. However, it is not clear from the talk that the fathers of the children of single mothers are considered as part of the family of the woman – though they are considered as necessary to the wellbeing of children. Marriage is constructed as no longer a necessary requirement for a couple who have a child; rather, it is constructed as a relationship that is freely chosen. Chapter 4 discussed varying definitions of family and the ways in which these overlap conceptually in empirical work on families. A notable aspect of the discussions with the intergenerational groups who participated in this study - and this may be related to the kinds of family who were prepared to take part in interviews of this kind on this topic - was that family was defined in relation to biological family of origin and in intergenerational terms rather than in relation to the being part of a nuclear family or couple with a child. As Cook (2014) notes, definitions of family vary according to individual meanings, as well as to living arrangements and biological relatedness.

Chapter 7. Family roles and relationships

Having examined the ways in which family is worked up in the talk of the women, the next chapter will move on to show some of the ways in which talk is managed mutually as a collaboration in the talk of the women.

Chapter 8. Managing talk in families

This final empirical chapter answers the question: How did the families collaborate in working up versions of events and themselves? I will present findings in relation to the stories that were told by the participants about the interactions between family members and how interactions were managed in group talk. The final section will then present an example of one of the ways in which talk was managed within interactions. The first section will present some of the ways in which the women talked about the trouble that arose when they broke the news of pregnancy. This is an event that is infused with a variety of emotions. The ways in which these emotions are managed in talk will be discussed. The last chapter showed that families were constructed as supportive but also as disappointed and embarrassed by out of wedlock pregnancy. In this chapter, I will present some family talk about the necessity of ensuring that single mothers faced negative consequences as a result of the birth of a child. The chapter will then go on to examine some examples of family collaboration in telling stories and working up versions of family identities in the interviews.

8.1 Troubled talk: managing delicate subjects

Narratives about giving or receiving the news of a pregnancy arose in many of the discussions about single motherhood across the data. This first section will argue that some pregnancies are regarded as 'sanctioned' pregnancies and others as 'unsanctioned'. The data presented will demonstrate that the meaning attached to a pregnancy was relevant

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to the ways in which the women narrated stories of communicating and receiving the news of a pregnancy.

The following two extracts are the daughter and grand-daughter in Family 5. In both of these accounts, the pregnancy is constructed as a welcome event; one which is socially sanctioned.

Extract 52 (*f5 D 2-8*)

- | | | |
|----|------------------|---|
| 1 | Lisa: | tell me about when you got pregnant first |
| 2 | Rosemary: | ohh (.) em (.) that was exciting haha |
| 3 | Lisa: | I can imagine |
| 4 | Rosemary: | well em huh we were married and em I wasn't feeling very well (.) I kept |
| 5 | | getting migraines (.) and then we went and ah (.) to the doctor (.) and she |
| 6 | | says ah 'I think you're pregnant Mrs W |
| 7 | Lisa: | aha |
| 8 | Rosemary: | and we had to go and have the tests an (.) I was (.) ahh (.) it was all |
| 9 | | excitement (.) all |
| 10 | Lisa: | so you were happy about it |
| 11 | Rosemary: | oh god yeah we were |
| 12 | Lisa: | ok |
| 13 | Rosemary: | we were ecstatic |

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Extract 53 (*f5 gd 5-13*)

- 1 **Jaqueline:** ok (.) em (.) dyknow when I first found out I was pregnant it was really
2 exciting and it was (.) Luke had been very well planned (.) a very much
3 wanted and it was like (.) myself and his father we were all giddy (.) and
4 we went out to get the pregnancy test and we came back and I went into
5 the toilet and I came out with it and the two of us (.) it was it was actually
6 a really lovely experience (.) initially finding out I was pregnant and em (.)
7 it was (.) very hard to keep him quiet (.) I wanted to wait twelve weeks
8 and he kept going around telling everyone and he was he was really really
9 excited so it was a big shock to me (.) when he decided that he didn't want
10 to be with me anymore (.) when I was four months pregnant (.) em so
11 really I suppose the initial stages of my pregnancy were really exciting

In these extracts, news of the pregnancy is constructed as causing great excitement (lines 2, 5, 8). Work is done in the talk of both of the women to establish the respectability of these pregnancies. The use of 'em huh we were married' and 'Mrs W' (line 4) in introducing the story of finding out about the pregnancy, as well as 'Luke had been very well planned (.) a very much wanted' identify the pregnancies as socially sanctioned and thus respectable. In both of these accounts, the male partner is part of the story of the discovery of the pregnancy. Furthermore, the emotion talk in the narratives is about a couple's shared enjoyment of the discovery, 'we were ecstatic' (line 7). Such are the affective consequences of this emotion in one of the stories that the man is presented as not being able to keep the pregnancy a secret, 'it was (.) very hard to keep him quiet' (lines 12, 13) because of his excitement about the good news.

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However, in the case of unsanctioned pregnancies, those which might be regarded as leading to identity trouble (Wetherell, 2005), there appears to be communicative trouble in breaking the news of the pregnancy. In each of the following two extracts, Tara, the granddaughter in Family 2, and Julie, the daughter in Family 1, work up a version of communicating pregnancy news.

Extract 54 (*f2 gd 90-92*)

- 1 **Tara:** I remember sitting them down (.) and I was just like (.)' I have something
2 to tell you (.) you better sit down' (.) and they were just like (.) they just
3 knew straight away (.) as soon as I told them to sit (laughs)

Extract 55 (*F1 D I 40-46*)

- 4 **Julie:** so I left (.) I moved out (.) I got a flat (.) I didn't tell them I was moving I
5 just left and
6 **Lisa:** did you go far
7 **Julie:** no (.) no (.) I stayed in the same town (.) em (.) I just told my mum the
8 night that I was leaving that I was moving in with Mike (.) she said, 'over
9 my dead body' (.) and I said 'I'm afraid it's gonna have to be (.) I have to
10 move out' (.) she was crying (.) she was very upset (.) she knew what I
11 meant (.) that I was pregnant (.) I said 'you're gonna have to tell Dad' (.) she
12 said 'no' (.) I said (.)'well I'm not telling him'

Tara's use of the phrase, 'you better sit down' (line 2) is a well-worn precursor to the breaking of bad news. As she notes herself, 'they just knew straight away' (lines 3, 4). In

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this narrative, she avoids having to say the words, 'I'm pregnant' by asking her parents to sit.

Julie uses a different technique, something akin to what social psychologists have termed, 'door in the face' (Cialdini, et al., 1975). Cialdini et al. found that a technique of persuasion was to make a large request which was refused in order to get a smaller request accepted. Julie appears to have reversed the order of this communication in her story. In saying that she is moving in with her boyfriend, she is saying something that she frames as unacceptable to her mother: She said, 'over my dead body' (line 8, 9). I am calling this a *bridging shock* because it appears to make a conversational bridge between one unpalatable piece of news and another even more palatable one. In this case, the news is one that is communicated obliquely. The explicit information is suppressed from the talk 'and I said 'I'm afraid it's gonna have to be (.) I have to move out' (lines 9, 10). It is only at this point in the narrative, that Julie's mother is constructed as understanding the full implication of the utterances, even though pregnancy is not mentioned. Similarly, in Tara's account, 'they just knew straight away (.) as soon as I told them to sit' (lines 3) indicates that silence is a form of communication.

Billig (2006) describes silences in talk as 'discursive repression'. In developing this concept, he draws on Wittgenstein's idea that talk is action oriented and also on Freudian psychoanalytic concepts. His claim is that certain talk is unsayable in particular discursive contexts. As Billig (1987) has noted, different rhetorical strategies are used for different audiences. He argues that shared patterns can prevent other patterns of actions from happening. In both of these previous examples, silence around certain words is presented as doing communicative work whilst preventing the audience from being too great a shock.

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Avoidance of explicit announcement might be regarded as a kind of discursive delicacy, which is utilised to soften the impact of the news by omitting the need to say the words that might most simply and explicitly communicate the pregnancy (Silverman and Perákyla, 1990).

In Julie's account, this is evident in her 'I just told my mum the night that I was leaving that I was moving in with Mike' (lines 7, 8). Words relating to pregnancy are left to be inferred. It would appear then that in the case of unsanctioned pregnancy, delicacy, and consideration of the emotional consequences for the hearer result in silences, which are presented as necessary tools in relating pregnancy news.

The reason for this care in selecting a communicative strategy is apparent in the taken for granted assumption in the talk, as such news is likely to cause emotional upset. In Tara's account, this is implicit in her request to them to sit down: an action which is associated with ensuring that a person does not come to bodily harm from a shock. In Julie's account, a more explicit account of affect is constructed, 'she was crying (.) she was very upset (.) she knew what I meant that I was pregnant' (lines 10, 11). This care, then, in breaking news which might cause upset, might usefully be identified as a strategy for managing what Wetherell (2012) describes as emotional regimes; the range of emotions that can be expressed in a particular context and the ways in which they are displayed. In these narratives, the talk is managed to allow the meaning to be communicated slowly in the context of anticipated emotional upset.

Julie's account also invokes another kind of silence which arose in several of the women's stories: a silence of her own in leaving her mother to break the news to her father, 'I said

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'you're gonna have to tell Dad' (.) she said 'no' (.) I said 'well I'm not telling him' (lines 11, 12). It appears, then, that Julie positions herself as avoiding the imagined emotional reaction of her father to the news of her pregnancy by not communicating with him at all.

The next extract is particularly interesting because of the way in which a story of the past, told in the present, allows for the description of emotions that may not have been permissible at the time. The following is from Erín, the daughter from Family 6.

Extract 56 (*f6 group A 86-91*)

- 1 **Erín:** Well you see this is the weirdest thing, because I wanted a baby (.) at 15
2 (.) yes (.) I was with first boyfriend Neal (.) since I think 13 or 14 (.) idolised
3 him (.) delighted and yes (.) I was going to have a baby (.) so I decided to
4 have a baby (.) so it wasn't like typical 'oh my god (.) I got pregnant and
5 this is going to be a disaster' (.) I was so excited (.) but I couldn't let on
6 that I was excited (.) I had to let on that oh my god (.) poor me (.) I'm
7 pregnant, what am I going to do (.) but deep down inside (.) I was
8 delighted.

Erín's account has elements of the socially sanctioned pregnancy narrative that was apparent in the stories told by Jacqueline and Rosemary. The pregnancy is not positioned as an accident: 'I wanted a baby', 'so I decided to have a baby' (lines 3, 4). Her relationship is framed as committed and ongoing, 'I was with first boyfriend Neal' whom she 'idolised' (line 2), indicating a respectability: this was a committed and loving relationship.

As in the socially sanctioned pregnancy talk in Extracts 52 and 53, at the start of this chapter, this pregnancy is constructed as a planned and welcome pregnancy, which was the cause of joy, 'I was so excited' 'delighted' (lines 5,6,7). However, because of her age,

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‘this is the weirdest thing’ (line 1), she argues that it was necessary to silence these elements of her reaction to the pregnancy, ‘but I couldn’t let on that I was excited’ (lines 5, 6). At the same time, she justifies her pregnancy on the same terms as the socially sanctioned narratives related in Extracts 47 and 48, planning, loving relationship, joy and excitement. The positive affect that she attributed to the pregnancy was, she argues, out of necessity, silenced: ‘I had to let on that oh my god (.) poor me (.) I’m pregnant, what am I going to do’ (lines 6, 7). It is clear then that what Erín is relating is a story about repression of talk that is available to those using a sanctioned pregnancy narrative, a clear example of what Wetherell (2012) describes as ‘curtailed’ affect, her age and social circumstance mean that the her happiness and excitement were not expressible at that time. At the time in which she told the story to me, social circumstances were different. She was older. The child she had is an adult. Marriage has become less important for having children. And she is still in a relationship with the father of her child. This means that different emotional regimes apply, allowing her to tell this story.

Another way in which pregnancy news stories were related was in terms of a hierarchy of how difficult certain people might be to tell the news to. Orla, the granddaughter in Family 3, talks in this next Extract about telling people about her pregnancy.

Extract 57 (*f3 Gd 15-28*)

- | | | |
|---|--------------|--|
| 1 | Orla: | yeah (.) well the first thing that went through my head though was like (.) |
| 2 | | not even scared about having a baby (.) scared about telling people |
| 3 | Lisa: | yeah |
| 4 | Orla: | it wasn’t even (.) dya know like (.) obviously (.) afterwards I thought of all |
| 5 | | that like |

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- 6 **Lisa:** ok
- 7 **Orla:** the initial thing was to tell this person and that person (.) but once I got
- 8 over that (.) telling all those people (.) em it (.) was easier
- 9 **Lisa:** who was the hardest person to tell
- 10 **Orla:** emm (.) my granny and my granda (.) which were my mother's mother
- 11 and father em em but (.) like they were all hard but they were the worst
- 12 like and I didn't tell them myself (.) so
- 13 **Lisa:** who told them
- 14 **Orla:** my mother and (.) my uncle
- 15 **Lisa:** ok
- 16 **Orla:** yeah
- 17 **Lisa:** so why was it so hard with them (.) what was
- 18 **Orla:** cause I knew that (.) I didn't even know their reaction (.) I knew their
- 19 reaction would be bad like (.) but I didn't em like I knew they weren't
- 20 going to be 'oh I'm delighted for you' (laughs) em obviously nobody's
- 21 gonna react like that at the start like dyknow but (.) there I knew

Orla argues that the first difficult part of being pregnant was not the anticipation of having the baby but the talk that was necessary to let others know she was pregnant, 'not even scared about having a baby (.) scared about telling people and' (lines 2,3). Her expressed concern is related to managing any potential emotional reactions her pregnancy might elicit. She describes being 'scared' (line 2), of 'telling this person and that person' (lines 7, 8), and indeed says that she left the task of telling her grandparents to other family members (line 14); 'and I didn't tell them myself' (line 12) because of her imagined reaction to the news, 'I knew [...] their reaction would be bad like' (lines 18, 19). She argues that she

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avoided this communication because, given the unsanctioned nature of the pregnancy, 'I knew they weren't going to be 'oh I'm delighted for you' (laughs) 'em obviously nobody's gonna react like that at the start' (lines 20, 21). Such rules relating to how to manage the trouble related to an unsanctioned pregnancy, seemed to require little explanation. The delicacy, silence and

avoidance of telling people is a standard part of communicative practice that was easily recognisable; so too is the emotional regime in which she is certain that she will not be congratulated for an unsanctioned pregnancy.

In Extract 58, I am discussing this same pregnancy news with Sheila, Orla's mother.

Extract 58 (*f3 D 86-90*)

- | | | |
|----|----------------|--|
| 1 | Lisa: | and you were the one who broke the news to them (.) that she was (.) |
| 2 | | expecting |
| 3 | Sheila: | yes (.)yes |
| 4 | Lisa: | how did that go |
| 5 | Sheila: | oh my mother was hysterical (.) and she (.) my mother even went off work |
| 6 | | and everything (.) cause Orla had such (.)potential with education and |
| 7 | | everything |
| 8 | Lisa: | mm |
| 9 | Sheila: | when she was young she wanted to be a primary school teacher (.) and all |
| 10 | | of a sudden (.) from fourth year on she just (.) gave up (.) gave up (.) for |
| 11 | | someone who was bright |

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In raising this topic in this extract, my talk reflects the same kind of hesitant approach that has been demonstrated when talking about unsanctioned pregnancies, 'who broke the news to them (.) that she was (.) expecting' (line 2). This approach avoids the word pregnancy, and the pauses after 'then' and 'was', leading up to 'expecting' (lines 1,2) do the work of introducing the topic in ways that are delicate and not too sudden or jarring in this context.

Sheila goes on to characterise her mother as having been 'hysterical', the consequences of which are constructed as that she 'even went off work and everything' (line 5). This grandmother's affect is explained with reference to loss of Orla's 'potential' (line 6) to succeed at education (line 8) because she was bright (line 11). The presentation of this as such a cause of great upset is not linked to chastity and marriage prospects, as it might have been in previous historical periods, when marriage was the main route to financial security for women, but rather as an opportunity failure - 'she just (.) gave up' (line 10). The emotional loss attributed to her grandmother, then, is related to her failure to live up to the neoliberal ideal of a woman who can participate fully in being a good consumer. Family goals are goals for their children and, indeed, grandchildren and their need to build a secure future.

This apparent halting of Orla's opportunity for social mobility appears from Sheila's presentation of the story, as a matter for both her mother and her grandmother to lament. Reddy (2001) argues that affect is regulated by the relationship between emotions and goals of individuals. However, in this data, the affective power is also part of the mutuality of aims and intentions of family members for family members, in particular, in the regulation of when young women become pregnant. Orla's pregnancy and entre into

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motherhood, then, are constructed as a cause of negative affect, not just as a matter for herself, but for her mother and grandmother also.

In addition to repression of talk when people talk about breaking pregnancy news, there was discussion of discursive repression by people receiving news of unsanctioned pregnancies. The following extract is from Mags, the grandmother in Family 2, who is talking about hearing the news of her granddaughter's pregnancy.

Extract 59 (*f 2 G 208-215*)

- 1 **Mags:** Yeah (.) I remember when she came home and told me and she said 'you
2 are going to be a great granny' and I said 'that's great news' (.) because
3 you'd to be very careful (.) no matter what situation you are in in life (.) if
4 you bring news to anybody's door (.) be awful careful (.) be very careful
5 of what you say (.) now you can't keep to tears or anything else (.) but I
6 knew (.) now there's the difference (.) I knew in her generation (.) she was
7 going to be okay (.) that is the difference (.) there were no worries (.) the
8 worries for that are gone (.) if that had happened long ago (.) she'd be in
9 trouble

Mags describes a deliberate and careful repression of her own emotional reaction and indeed a substitution with what she constructs as appropriate 'and I said' that's great news' (.) because you'd to be very careful' (line 3) 'be awful careful (.) be very careful of what you say' (lines 4, 5). In addition, she talks about the repression of her own emotional response, 'Now you can't keep to tears or anything else' (line 5) to make the interaction as trouble free as possible for her granddaughter. This is interesting, in terms of delicacy work, because unlike in previous research, which has shown delays, hesitations, and omissions as

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forms of delicacy (Silverman and Perákyla, 1990; Weijts, et al., 1993), this is a story about the use of positive affect as a form of delicacy. This kind of management of emotion talk was demonstrated in quite complex and interesting ways in some of the interviews. The following quotation is from Kate, the grandmother in Family 6.

Extract 60 (*f6 group A 71-84*)

- 1 **Kate:** Then my daughter got pregnant, (.) she was in England (.) she went to see
2 her father after years (.) so that was a mission she was on (.)and she rang
3 me and she said she was pregnant (.) I thought 'oh my god' and my mother
4 and father and grandmother would have been (.) she would have been
5 the favourite (.) and I said (.) how am I going to tell my mother (.) because
6 my mother was a very dominant woman (.) I was thinking and thinking (.)
7 and I said (.) what will I do (.) I got a brainwave (.) I said 'we'll do reverse
8 psychology on this one' (.) so she came down (.) I said I have something
9 to tell you I said (.) you are not to get upset (.) Erín is pregnant (.) she is
10 having a baby (.)but I said (.) we are getting rid of it (.) we are putting her
11 into an unmarried mothers home in Cork and we are getting rid of that
12 child (.) so nobody will know about it (.) she turned on me (.) what a
13 wicked witch I was (.)how could I do that to my grandchild (.) so baby was
14 accepted (.) they were all fine about this baby (.) there was flowers and
15 everyone was fighting over this child (.) but em (.) it was totally and utterly
16 accepted

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In this extract, Kate uses a different kind of language from the other examples. The strategy she describes for communicating with her mother is one of confrontation, 'how am I going to tell my mother (.) because my mother was a very dominant woman' (lines 5, 6), 'we'll do reverse psychology on this one' (line 7, 8).

She does not discursively repress the word pregnant in her account of talking to her mother, and does not use the hedges that were evident in the earlier extracts, 'Erin is pregnant (.) she is having a baby' (lines 9,10). As Kate tells it, the facts are communicated in the starkest of terms, 'we are getting rid of it putting her into an unmarried mothers home' (lines 10,11), 'we are getting rid of that child (line 11) 'so nobody will know about it' (line 12). It would appear then that in this version of the story, she deliberately avoids the discursive delicacy relating to affect, to provoke a confrontation, 'she turned on me (.) what a wicked witch I was (.) how could I do that to my grandchild' (lines 12, 13), and, ultimately, manage her mother's emotion in a way that will obtain the result she wants - 'so baby was accepted (.) they were all fine about this baby' (lines 13, 14).

Stories of affective meaning making in these extracts involve a complex and carefully managed weaving of the imagined and putative emotional states of other family members, regulation and silencing of emotional display and avoidance of situations in which strong negative emotions might be the outcome. It would appear, to borrow from Goffman (1955), that a kind of emotional face saving is mutually constructed. For Goffman, participants in interaction adhere to the unspoken rules in the organisation of talk. However, from time to time, the rules are broken by one of the speakers. When this happens, Goffman argues, the participants in the conversation continue on as if the breach didn't happen. They do this, Goffman claims, in order to save face for the person who

broke the rule. In these conversations, the unspoken rule seems to be that displays of negative affect are not acceptable. In these conversations, a way of managing delivering talk that is likely to result in negative affect, is to deliver it delicately. Stories about communicating troubling news, then, suggests that specific communicative strategies are used in talk to achieve or avoid particular outcomes, in relation to emotion laden topics. What is clear from the stories is that they draw on shared assumption about how news that may not be welcome should be broken and demonstrate the kinds of techniques that are utilised for doing so.

8.2 You make your bed: you lie in it

In addition to talk about the management of affect when communicating unwelcome pregnancy news, the participants also produced narratives in which affect was managed in ways which provided accountability and consequences for the women who became pregnant.

In Extract 60, Cait, the grandmother in Family 4, talks with me about her wedding.

Extract 60 (*F4 G 31-37*)

- 17 **Lisa:** so no celebration over the marriage
- 18 **Cait:** no not at all no way (.) my mother went to work when I got married
- 19 **Lisa:** really
- 20 **Cait:** mm (.) but you know at the time (.) I was kind of cross over it (.) part of
- 21 me use to be (.) but you won't dare say it (.) but you know years go by (.)

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- 22 and you forgive and we all did what we did (.) what we thought was right
23 (.) that was what she thought was right
- 24 **Lisa:** and did you feel that you kind of had to take your punishment
- 25 **Cait:** oh yes (.) kind of (.) you make your bed(.) you lie on it(.) that was a huge
26 thing (.) you make your bed you lie on it (.) and you know (.) you got a call
27 for trouble so you (.) you know you had to get on with it (.) make the best
28 out of it (.) that was the rule(.) we just made the best out of it

Cait talks about being 'kind of cross' (line 2) because her mother 'went to work' (line 2) instead of attending her marriage. She argues that she silenced her unhappiness, 'you won't dare say it' (line 5) and because her mother was following 'the rule' (line 12) and did 'what she thought was right' (lines 6, 7). She alludes to dissatisfaction with this event by arguing that she forgave her mother, subsequently.

In the excerpt, I suggest another potential reason for her silence about her own unhappiness with her mother's absence from the wedding, 'did you feel that you kind of had to take your punishment' (line 8). Cait agrees 'oh yes' (line 9) but then develops this idea to one of consequences for her own actions with the phrase, 'you make your bed you lie on it' (lines 9, 10), 'you got a call for trouble' (lines 10, 11) to indicate that these were consequences of her own making. She then positions herself as accepting the rule (line 12), with constructions of having to 'get on with it' (line 11) and 'make the best out of it' (line 12). This construction of family as enforcing consequences for out of wedlock pregnancy by allowing emotional discomfort, was evident in a number of places across the

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interviews. Extract 61 is from Aoife, the granddaughter in Family 1, who was talking to me in her individual interview about after her son was born.

Extract 61 (*f1 Gd 80-88*)

- 1 **Aoife:** but then like for the first few weeks after he was born they did give me a
2 hard time for it (.) they were kinda like ‘well (.) what else did you expect’
3 (.) you know (.) cos I found it really difficult trying to go back to school (.)
4 cos I was still in school and I was still only 18 and like he didn’t sleep
5 **Lisa:** oh
6 **Aoife:** he cried (.) he had colic
7 **Lisa:** mhm
8 **Aoife:** he cried for a year and a half (.) and I was like (.) “I can’t do it” (.) well I
9 was never actually ever saying that (.) but like things were going bad (.)
10 but they kept saying (.) ‘now ya know (.) if ya didn’t (.) if ya took more of
11 this and da da da dem’ and ‘what were ya doing with that fella anyway’

Aoife also constructs a narrative about the reactions of her family when her son was born. She constructs her family as people who ‘did give me a hard time for it’ (lines 1, 2). This ‘hard time’ is contextualised in terms of her personal circumstances, ‘I was still in school’ (line 4), ‘I was still only 18’ (lines 4, 5), as well as the demands of looking after her son, which she argues was difficult: ‘he didn’t sleep’ (line 5) ‘he cried (.)’ ‘he had colic’ (line 7) ‘he cried for a year and a half’ (line 9). The family is characterised as responding to her difficulty, ‘I can’t do it’ (line 9) with blame ‘well (.) what else did you expect’ (lines 2, 3)

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‘what were ya doing with that fella anyway’ (lines 12, 13). In Aoife’s account then, her difficulties with the baby were greeted with scolding by her family. In the next extract, Kate, the grandmother in Family 6, talks about ensuring that her daughter Erín did not get pain relief during the birth of her child.

Extract 62 (F6 group B 1-20)

- 1 **Lisa:** so you were saying in the break that when Erín got pregnant, you
2 didn’t want her to have an epidural
- 3 **Kate:** no
- 4 **Lisa:** tell me about that
- 5 **Kate:** I thought that, by not having an epidural and going through the torture of
6 child birth (.) that she’ll never again get pregnant (.) so I went to the
7 doctor with her and the clinic (.) and we were chatting (.) and he had said
8 that the epidural was just coming in [*it had become available in the local*
9 *hospital*] about that stage (.) I think it was coming in of a Tuesday and
10 Thursday (.) so he said, he’d try and arrange for her to have it (.) and I
11 stepped in straight away (.) I said ‘I do not want her to have an epidural I
12 want her to feel every pain’
- 13 **Lisa:** why
- 14 **Kate:** teach her a lesson I suppose
- 15 **Lisa:** so you were angry with her on some level for getting pregnant
- 16 **Kate:** I suppose I was (.) without realising it (.) I was, because I said she has
17 ruined her life now (.)and this is the end result and I didn’t bring her up

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- 18 for this to happen to her (.) my life was fucked up (.) so my theory was (.)
19 I could live my life through my children (.) which is fairly stupid (.) once
20 they were achieving and they were well (.) that's all I wanted out of life (.)
21 so she was after breaking the golden rule (.) she got pregnant

In Kate's account, she wanted to 'teach her [Erín] a lesson' (line 15) she argues that she imagined that Erín had 'ruined her life' (line 18). This, she argued, conflicted with Kate's ambitions for her daughter, 'I didn't bring her up for this to happen' (lines 18, 19). This suggests, as in Tara's story, that a young woman becoming pregnant whilst unmarried is positioned as a parental failure. As with Cait's story in Extract 60, getting pregnant is constructed as 'breaking the golden rule' (lines 22, 23). Kate tells the story of telling the doctor, 'I do not want her to have an epidural I want her to feel every pain' (line 12, 13) in order that she should experience the full force of 'going through the torture of child birth' (lines 5, 6) and that this would ensure 'that she'll never again get pregnant' (line 6). Families then, although supportive and kind, still tell stories of managing and being managed by family members. As Jaqueline said in Chapter 6, they are allowed 'one mistake'. The family is thus further constructed as having a function in the management of the behaviour of a young woman and in ensuring that there are no further unsanctioned pregnancies. Families, then, collaborate in talk to manage the behaviour of single mothers.

Narratives of family censure were not limited to anecdotes about immediate family members, with whom the young women were living. Hannah, the grandmother in Family 7 is talking in Extract 63 about her cousin who also became pregnant whilst unmarried. This story is in the context of a visit by Hannah and her cousin to their aunt.

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Extract 63 (F7 G 7-20)

- 1 **Hannah:** and then we were two criminals because of what we did
- 2 **Lisa:** you had each other
- 3 **Hannah:** we had each other (.) and we used to have great laughing (.) when auntie
- 4 would say (.) 'come in here Satan's god and Satan's child' I mean you
- 5 wouldn't say that to anybody in this day and age
- 6 **Lisa:** and she wasn't joking (.) this was
- 7 **Hannah:** oh Jesus Christ no (.) she meant everything (.) she was a spinster (.) we
- 8 had shamed everybody around us (.) she wouldn't look at the baby (.) but
- 9 we said to each other (.) 'at least we got in' (.) we were very grateful to
- 10 get in the half door in the old house
- 11 **Lisa:** you were just grateful to be allowed in her home
- 12 **Hannah:** yes (.) because we were bad people

Hannah appears to dismiss the categorisation of 'Satan's god and Satan's child' (line 4) as amusing 'and we used to have great laughing' (line 3). She also argues that it is an outdated form of discourse, 'you wouldn't say that to anybody in this day and age' (line 5). She takes up the position for herself and her cousin of 'two criminals' (line 1) who had 'shamed everybody around us' (line 8) and were 'bad people' (line 12). She accounts for her aunt's treatment and refusal to 'look at the baby' (lines 8, 9), in terms of her being a 'spinster' (line 7). However, it also demonstrates that the bad person identity was taken up as one which was, to some extent, justified.

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Although, as was illustrated in Chapter 7, families were often positioned and positioned themselves as supportive of young single mothers in the interviews, this section has illustrated that families also worked to apply sanctions to the woman. These positions of deserving of discomfort or criticism were frequently taken up as justifiable or forgivable in the circumstances, even though they resulted in emotions which were often unspecified but certainly were presented as unpleasant. Unsanctioned child bearing was talked about as something which was deserving of reproach, even after the child was born. It was positioned, in some cases, as Jaqueline argued in Extract 12, section 6.1, as a 'mistake', one which should not be repeated and of which the single mother was reminded of, as a deterrent from future unsanctioned child bearing. The next section will turn to how families collaborated in talk to construct versions of events and will begin by returning to the topic of respectability.

8.3 Managing mutuality: family talk

Chapter 6 presented evidence of how women negotiated the trouble that emerges from single motherhood identities by working up versions of themselves as respectable. This necessitated distancing themselves from single mother stereotypes without challenging or contesting the stereotypes on which they drew.

Respectability was also worked up collaboratively in the group interviews with the families. In addition, families collaborated in talk to work up collective family identities.

In this final section, I want to present some data which illustrates the ways in which families cooperated in working up versions of themselves and events jointly. This next, quite lengthy extract, is Family 6 discussing respectability for women and mothers. Kate is the

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grandmother, Erín is the daughter, and Veronica is the granddaughter. The extract is presented as an example of the ways in which families can work together to marshal discursive resources to develop positions of respectability as women and as a family.

Extract 64 (*f6 group B 378-408*)

- 1 **Kate:** but I'd never socialise in town (.) never
- 2 **Lisa:** why not
- 3 **Kate:** I hate that town
- 4 **Erín:** and I'm the same
- 5 **Lisa:** really (.) why
- 6 **Kate:** I think it's scummy (.) it's a horrible thing to say
- 7 **Erín:** I don't know is it the way that I was brought up (.) that my mother would
- 8 be (.) kind of like em (.) I don't know, she kind of had high standards about
- 9 your (.) respectability (.) I suppose you would have had high standards
- 10 about respectability about drinking in pubs or bringing your children into
- 11 pubs (.) I never would I bring the girls into pubs (.)
- 12 **Veronica:** I can comment now (.) because hearing from my mum (.) if I see kids
- 13 outside (.) I say 'that's ridiculous' (.) I'd be constantly watching if kids were
- 14 in a pub (.) because I always hear it from mum (.) that it's very bad to do
- 15 that and stuff
- 16 **Erín:** I don't go out (.) I don't (.) I think I probably got it from you
- 17 **Lisa:** going to pubs is not respectable for a woman
- 18 **Kate:** not on a regular basis (.) which is wrong (.) I mean I go now (.) Lisa when I
- 19 go away for a weekend (.) but I mean (.) going down [local town] is like

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- 20 putting me into a hellhole (.) because I look at them and I think (.) and I'd
21 know a lot of people to see (.) I think oh scumbag (.) and that's being
22 judgemental (.) which is not nice (.) she should be at home minding her
23 kids that wagon (.) I'm judging (.) or how dare she stand on the high moral
24 ground and she out of her mind
- 25 **Veronica:** what's weird as well (.) like Des [*grandmother's partner*] would be in the
26 pubs now (.) and my dad would have been in the pubs (.) but you don't
27 (.) you wouldn't do it
- 28 **Erín:** Oh no
- 29 **Veronica:** but my dad would have been in the pubs (.) always in the pubs and Des
30 would have, but you don't do it (.) so that kind of (.) the men
- 31 **Lisa:** so do you think then women have to be more moral than men then
- 32 **Kate:** maybe we do
- 33 **Erín:** I probably would be a little bit like that yes (.) definitely
- 34 **Kate:** I always used to say (.) you can't buy respectability

The extract begins with the statement from Kate, 'I'd never socialise in town (.) never' (line 1). The women argue that not going out and not drinking in pubs is a marker of respectability. Erín immediately responds to Kate's claims about not socialising in the local town with, 'I'm the same' (line 4) and later in the extract she confirms, 'I don't go out' (line 14). In accounting for the stance, 'I hate that town' (line 3), Kate argues it is 'scummy' (line 6) and a 'hellhole' (line 17). This is worked up as a value held by all the family. Erin says, 'it's the way that I was brought up (.) that my mother [...] had high standards about your (.)

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respectability' (lines 7, 8) and 'I think I probably got it from you' (line 14). Veronica also adds that she can comment (line 11) because she has heard from her mum (line 12) 'that it's very bad to do that' (line 13). The women in this family are using narrative to pass on moral and social values, in ways that are similar to those identified by Fivush, et al. (2008), who call this, parent-guided reminiscing. They argue that it is used as a way of bonding between parents and children and as a way in which children learn to manage and understand emotions. Similarly, Wang and Leichtman (2000) and McLean and Breen (2009) argue that family narratives are used to transmit cultural values and power structures. The family in this extract weave together gendered respectability, disgust and disapproval, emotions and evaluations to produce a shared narrative of the kind of family that they are. Family and the way in which these three generations do it, is lived out in talk of respectability. Lack of respectability is identified in this discussion as demonstrated by 'drinking in pubs' (line 9). However, as Veronica and I note, this lack of respectability is for women only, 'but my dad would have been in the pubs (.) always in the pubs and Des would have, but you don't do it (.) so that kind of (.)the men' (lines 22, 23). Veronica's and my questioning of the double standard in relation to women being in pubs is met with an agreement from Kate and Erín that women have to be more moral than men. Kate says, 'maybe we do' (line 28) and Erín adds, 'probably would be a little bit like that yes (.) definitely' (line 29); any potential resistance on Veronica's part, to the idea that it might be acceptable to drink in a pub is closed down by Kate's assertion 'I always used to say (.) you can't buy respectability' (line 30).

Women who drink in pubs are linked to a lack of respectability as women, 'I think oh scumbag' (lines 19, 20) and drunkenness 'out of her mind' (line 20). But it is also linked to

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bad mothering; as Erín puts it, 'drinking in pubs or bringing your children into pubs' (lines 9, 10). It is this that brings Veronica into agreement, 'I'd be constantly watching if kids were in a pub [...] it's very bad to do that' (lines 11-13). Kate imagines a woman drinking in a pub and says, 'she should be at home minding her kids that wagon' (lines 19, 20). This is reminiscent of the argument by Douglas and Michaels (2004):

Put on the doting, self-sacrificing mother and wear it at all times. With intensive mothering, everyone watches us, we watch ourselves, and we watch ourselves watching ourselves. Motherhood has become a psychological police state' (Douglas and Michaels, 2004, p.6).

Kate positions herself as turning the gaze on others, 'I'd know a lot of people to see' (line 18) and judging (line 20) the woman in the pub who is 'out of her mind' (line 21), but also taking up a position of indignation, 'how dare she stand on the high moral ground' (line 20), indicating that she positions herself as being judged harshly too. It is possible then, that this family positions itself as a respectable family by seeking to avoid surveillance themselves and by taking up a high moral ground in relation to appropriate female and maternal respectability and remaining invisible by not socialising in pubs. The family cohere around a mutually agreed theme by carefully negotiating any objections from Veronica and myself.

Another example of the ways in which families collaborate to present versions of family stances is evident in this next extract. Tiggy, the grandmother, Julie, the daughter, and Aoife, the granddaughter, talk about family responses to representations of sex in public discourse.

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Extract 65 (*f1 group A 413-429*)

- 1 **Tiggy:** I mean as Aoife said (.) yeah (.) there is a lot more contraception out there
2 and everything like that (.) but is it used (.) there's more (.) they're taught
3 in school (.) where we weren't (.) oh I mean it was a taboo subject going
4 back (.) and you wouldn't even dream of saying the three letter word like
5 (.) it was not even (.) you couldn't even (.) even when we got the tv first
6 (.) you know (.) to see what was kissing on the tv (.) ya know (.) oh (.) you
7 don't look at that
- 8 **Lisa:** really
- 9 **Tiggy:** oh yeah
- 10 **Julie:** You were just as bad though (.) you and Dad were just as bad (.) if you
11 seen a couple kissing on the television (.) it was like 'turn over (.) turn over'
12 (laughter) 'close your eyes' (laughter)
- 13 **Tiggy:** ah no (.) now it wasn't that bad (.) now there'd be (.) that time (.) the
14 clothes were coming off (.) and they were having
- 15 **Julie:** you were the same (.) you'd turn it over
- 16 **Aoife:** like we weren't allowed to watch programmes like that (.) I still get really
17 cringy (.) if any sort of anything comes on the telly like (.) it's not just in
18 front of her (.) It's myself (.) I'll still be like (.) I'm not gonna watch that (.)
19 I'll turn it over (.) but em
- 20 **Julie:** I think the words are 'that's disgusting' (laughter)

In this extract the family negotiate an ideological dilemma in relation to Tiggy's opening statement, in which she is positioning the single mothers of today as irresponsible. On the one hand, sexual knowledge is necessary to avoid pregnancy and, on the other hand, it is

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not really a topic that a family should discuss. To make this point and find agreement, she refers to an earlier section of the conversation in which her granddaughter Aoife talks of the teen pregnancy prevention programme for which she works. Tiggy says that 'they're taught in school' (line 3) and that 'there is a lot more contraception out there and everything like that' but then poses the rhetorical question 'but is it used?' (lines 1, 2). In contrasting the current lack of responsibility amongst young women who become pregnant with her own situation, she says 'we weren't (.) oh I mean it was a taboo subject going back' (lines 3, 4). This develops into a discussion around the silences around sex and sexuality. Tiggy even omits the word sex from her own talk 'you wouldn't even dream of saying the three letter word like' (lines 4, 5). This happens again later in the extract when she is talking about people on the television, 'the clothes were coming off (.) and they were having' (line 15). This statement appears to be unfinished but the conversation is continued by Julie who follows on from with a related statement of her own 'you were the same (.) you'd turn it over' (line 16). This, again, is an example of the use of silence or discursive repression of words as a matter of conversational delicacy.

This discussion develops into teasing and laughter filled talk about family reactions to sexual acts on the television, 'it was like 'turn over(.) turn over' (laughter) 'close your eyes' (laughter) (lines 12, 13). Aoife argues that 'we weren't allowed to watch programmes like that' (line 17) and as a result they still make her uncomfortable 'I still get really cringy(.) if any sort of anything comes on the telly like' (line 18) to the extent that even when she is alone' 'I'll still be like (.) I'm not gonna watch that (.) I'll turn it over' (line 20).

In collaborating to present a view of themselves as a family who characterise sex on the television in the terms: 'I think the words are "that's disgusting" (laughter)' this family is

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also taking up a position similar to that of innocence identified in Chapter 6. They present themselves as being a family who are embarrassed, disgusted, and amused by sex acts because they, the family, are respectable. Most importantly, they do this collaboratively and negotiate a shared position on the topic, which indicates that they are a respectable family.

The final extract presented in this section is one in which a grandmother, Anna, and daughter, Sheila, collaborate in a discussion with Orla about whether or not she will return to work. Orla's baby was six weeks old at the time of the interview. She was on maternity leave from her job in a supermarket.

Extract 66 (*f3 group B 63-68*)

Anna: yeah but I think it's better now cause women go to work now or women never were seen to go to (.) work I mean they were supposed to stay at home mind the child (.) like it's more (.) the women get back to work (.) it's way better now completely

Lisa: working's better

Anna: yeah (.) I just think it's great to get out to work

Sheila: even if it's part time

Anna: totally agree yeah (.) well I worked full time but like I couldn't (.) I wouldn't (.) stay at home

Sheila: no

Anna: all day (.) every day

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- Orla:** Aha emm I would love part time (.) would be my ideal (.) but like (.) I would (.) like (.) to go to work and have
- Anna:** your own friends
- Sheila:** yeah and space
- Anna:** Yeah which is good
- Lisa:** ok (.) alright (.) how do you feel about the thought of mothering and working at some point
- Orla:** em (.) I'd say it would be hard enough (.) my hours wouldn't (.) like I wouldn't be like (.) have set hours (.) so I could em (.) be working (.) say (.) six to ten (.) some nights and then the next day it could be like (.) two to (.) d'know (.) they're all different
- Lisa:** mhm
- Orla:** so that would be kindof (.) y'know
- Anna:** you could be just suggesting
- Orla:** mm
- Anna:** your hours
- Sheila:** I sense you'd be better off working
- Orla:** yeah (.) no I would but I'm just saying like (.) if it was guaranteed like (.) nine to something (.) every day it would be fine

Anna constructs participation in the world of work by women as progress for women, 'it's better now cause women go to work now' (line 4) and contrasts this with, 'they were supposed to stay at home mind the child' (line 3). Both mother and grandmother work up

versions of themselves as having always worked full time, and also argue the benefits of working. Anna and Sheila collaborate in a back and forth of reasons: 'Anna: your own friends - Sheila: yeah and space - Anna: Yeah which is good' (lines 14-16). There is a sense that this discussion has taken place before, in that Sheila raises the possibility of part time work, 'even if it's part time' (line 7) early in the exchange and before Orla raises objections to the possibility of her return to her previous job 'it would be hard enough (.) my hours wouldn't (.) like I wouldn't be like (.) have set hours' (lines 19, 20). Anna suggests that hours might be negotiated and Sheila is emphatic that Orla should return to the workforce, 'I sense you'd be better off working' (line 28). This narrative of women working and women in this family working is used as a pivot to persuade Orla that this is the best course of action for her. It also accords with the neoliberal subject of being able to work and earn in order to participate in life.

As discussed previously, family status within the community is impacted by unsanctioned pregnancy and women are presented as having been scolded and punished for the consequences of their actions. The possibility that Orla might not return to work is one that would have implications the respectability of the family as a whole. The situation is thus repairable within the talk of the family. This conversation appears to work up a compelling argument that Orla should not rely on welfare and should be earning from paid employment as soon as possible. As was demonstrated in Extract 54, Sheila has already constructed Orla as someone who just 'gave up'. The talk in this extract is working to persuade Orla that a return to work would be in her best interests. Orla concedes that if the hours were suitable, 'it would be fine' (line 30). The extracts presented in the section demonstrate ways in which family identities are maintained and sustained by collaborative story telling.

8.4 Chapter conclusions

This third and final empirical chapter has built on some of the findings in Chapters 6 and 7 and examined some of the ways in which issues relating to single motherhood are negotiated within the family group discussions. As was demonstrated in Chapter 7, single motherhood is constructed as a matter for the entire family. In this chapter, the idea that some pregnancies were sanctioned and others were not sanctioned was presented and it was demonstrated that, in breaking the news of unsanctioned pregnancy to family members, certain strategies were worked up and discussed. Affect was managed for the recipient of the news and for the women themselves through the use of silences and discursive delicacy. Similarly, recipients of news talked of managing their reactions to that news and discursively repressing emotion and talk of disappointment out of consideration for the woman who was pregnant and of the potential for causing hurt that would be remembered.

Families also were positioned as sharing a belief that some consequences should be experienced by the single mother. For example, in struggling to manage a colicky child or experiencing the pain of childbirth. Despite the ways in which they negotiated the *sexually stigmatised women* and *neoliberal failure* discourses, the women took up subject positions of being transgressive 'bad people' and of deserving having a 'hard time' as the natural consequence of having breached social expectations, in relation to out of wedlock child bearing.

In the final section of the chapter, examples of families collaborating to 'do family' in particular ways were presented. The extracts demonstrated how the women worked collaboratively to construct versions of themselves as respectable families who had obtained their individual respectability from what they learned in the family, for example,

that respectable women do not drink in pubs. Respectable families are also, in common with the respectable women in Chapter 6, not too knowledgeable about sexual matters and certainly do not watch sexually explicit television.

The final extract that was presented examined ways in which families work together to persuade a single mother not to take up the position of neoliberal failure.

So, how did the families collaborate in working up versions of events and themselves? They managed delicate topics, such as the news of an unsanctioned pregnancy with delicacy and in ways that repressed certain words or phrases that might be too jarring for the hearer. In doing this, their familiarity with the rules of delicacy was demonstrated by the ways in which these rules were breached. I have argued that a *bridging shock* can prepare a hearer for more unpalatable news and that this still adheres to the face saving approach to talking about delicate subjects.

The significance of this finding is that it comes against the background of trouble; the kind of trouble that calls into question the stability of the family. Indeed, Carabine (2001), in her analysis of the historical construction of the stigmatization of single motherhood, argues that one of the reasons for concern about single mothers was in relation to fears about the breakdown of the nuclear family. However, what the collaborative talk in this section demonstrates is the ways in which families are used to maintain and sustain values and social standing.

Chapter 9. Concluding the thesis

This final chapter of the thesis will draw out the analysis in the previous chapters and explain the contributions that the research has made to academic knowledge about single motherhood in Ireland. The thesis has presented an analysis of the discursive construction of single motherhood in Irish families using original data collected between March 2013 and July 2015. The analysis was informed by the work of critical discursive psychologists (Billig; 1987; Billig, 1988; Wetherell, 1998; Harré, 2012), as well as by narrative psychology (Taylor and Littleton, 2006), and some concepts from conversation analysis (Silverman and Perákyla, 1990). It has argued that this was the most useful way to examine single motherhood in Ireland because of the often conflicting and variable discourses that are available for identity construction.

As I discussed in Chapter 2, Foucault (1982) identified, in his own work, three modes of inquiry into how subjects are constructed. The first mode that he identifies is the mode in which discourses come to obtain the status of science: he uses economics and medicine as examples and says that speaking subjects are objectified by these kinds of discourse. The second mode, he describes as dividing practices where subjects are categorised in particular ways, for example, the deserving and undeserving poor. The third mode of inquiry is how people come to recognise themselves as subjects, primarily by self-surveillance. In the data presented in Chapters 6, 7, and 8, these three ways of producing subjects can be seen as working in various ways. This will be explored further in this chapter as I assess the contribution to knowledge that this research has made.

9.1 How does the research contribute to knowledge?

The research has addressed the following questions, in relation to the troubled identities of single mothers:

- What discourses did the women draw upon when talking about single motherhood?
- How were discourses mobilised and resisted?
- How were versions of family worked up in the interviews?
- How did the families collaborate in working up versions of events and themselves?
- What dilemmas and contradictions arose in the talk of the women?

In assessing the contribution to knowledge that this thesis has made, the discussion will link back to the research questions. Contributions from the first two questions will be presented in section 9.1.1. The contributions from the second data chapter will be addressed in section 9.1.2, and the contributions from the third section will be discussed in section 9.1.3. Dilemmas and contradictions arose across the data and the contribution that their analysis offers to academic knowledge will therefore be addressed within these previous sub sections. I will then go on to talk about contributions related to the data and the research design. The chapter will conclude with a reflexive account of my role in the process of producing the thesis.

9.1.1 What discourses were drawn on and how were they mobilised and resisted?

In Chapter 6, three discourses were identified - the *sexually stigmatised woman*, the *neoliberal failure*, and the *good mother like any other*. The identification of these discourses and the ways in which they are mobilised and resisted offers an important understanding of the ways in which Irish women live their lives. The women in this study

negotiated these discourses in ways which highlight the complexity of managing subjectivities, in a society where neoliberal governance competes with governance of the Catholic Church. These contests are lived out in the talk of the women in this study. This is enormously important for understanding the complexity of the situations in which Irish women and, in particular, single mothers, find themselves. The women negotiated objectifying discourses relating to morality and neoliberal citizenship, whilst also negotiating classifying discourses that potentially position them as ‘fallen women’ or ‘welfare cheats’, for example. In this context, they weave a path to respectability taking up positions of naiveté and innocence in relation to sexual matters and arguing that they want to work.

The analysis of the ways in which sexuality was managed in talk offers another important contribution of ways in which the women in this study managed sexual identities. The interviews took place at a time when there had been recent rapid social change in Ireland. This change is often presented, as I discussed in Chapter 1, as something that separates ‘old Ireland’ from a newer and more progressive Ireland, which has shaken off the strictures of conservatism and in particular the Catholic church. This discourse of total change was also evident in the talk of the women. The women negotiated discourses about acceptable standards of moral sexual behaviour for women. There was a conflict between the discourses of progress, which included, for example, condemnation *of* condemning the ‘fallen women’ who were institutionalised in Magdalene Laundries. At times, they constructed judgement of women on the basis of chastity as a thing of the past. However, naiveté and innocence were necessary for their own negotiations of respectable womanhood. They argued, in most cases, that sexual stigmatisation did not apply to them. This is enormously important for our understanding of the ways in which Irish women

negotiate sexuality. The complexity of negotiating gendered ideals of chastity and sexual morality whilst at the same time arguing that these ideals no longer hold sway created another 'double bind' (Inglis and MacKeogh, 2012). For Inglis and McKeogh (2012), the double bind was a conflict between being sexually available to men whilst at the same time preserving sexual honour. In my research, the double bind was that the women took up discourses relating to chastity and lack of sexual knowledge, whilst at the same time arguing that these discourses were a thing of the past and that, for example, there was no excuse for lack of knowledge about contraception.

The analysis of the ways in which the discourse of *the neoliberal failure* was deployed also offered an important contribution to understanding the power of this discourse in Irish society. These women worked to avoid take-up of neoliberal failure for themselves. However, this discourse was negotiated in combination with *the sexually stigmatised woman* discourse. These discourses were discursively projected (I will address this concept below) onto other imagined single mothers, the kinds of women that Inglis (2002) describes as 'exemplars', women who are held up as an example of how not to behave. The women in the study contrasted themselves with these imagined women who did not want to work, were obtaining large amounts of money from social welfare, and had children by all different men. It was *other women* who were positioned as transgressors: other women who were getting too much welfare, or were undeserving of welfare; other women who gave other single mothers a 'bad name'. Being a neoliberal failure was positioned as the fault of this imagined woman, rather than as a faulty concept that should be resisted.

The dilemma for these women was that they were criticising other women on welfare whilst, in many cases, claiming welfare themselves. This particular neoliberal failure was constructed in ways which drew on discourses of deserving and undeserving poor (Breen

and Devereux, 2003) and on discourses of moral panic (Kerry, 2007), as well as linking to sexual irresponsibility: having too many children with all different fathers. The identification of the ways in which these discourses cohere and are lived out in the talk of the women is an important contribution to our understanding of how Irish women negotiate forms of objectification and dividing practices and how these relate to how they construct themselves.

The use of methods informed by critical discursive psychology in this research has allowed me to demonstrate complexities, negotiation, and dilemmas in the talk of the women in the study. The research also provides a demonstration of the ways in which Foucault's (1982) modes of inquiry are lived out in the talk of Irish women. What Foucault describes as the 'objectivising forces' of neoliberal modes of economic organisation and of the Catholic church, together with the dividing practices of discourses, such as the deserving and underserving poor or the neoliberal failure, can be seen in the ways that the women take up and manage their own subjectivities in relation to their single mother identities in a process of self-surveillance and self-management.

The thesis also adds to knowledge about techniques that are used in the rhetorical organisation of talk. The concept of discursive projection was used by McAvoy (2009) to describe the ways in which participants in her study projected ideas and states onto imagined others. This use of terminology that is associated with psychoanalysis (see Frosh, 1989, for a discussion) follows Billig's (2006) reformulation of the psychoanalytic concept of repression, as discursive repression. For Billig, repression of talk is not a consequence of unconscious processes, but a process that can be observed in everyday interactions and is learned in childhood. McAvoy draws on the Wetherell's (2003) concept of personal orders, the links between habit and affect in talk, to demonstrate discursive projections of her

participants' talk. She argues for a kind of discursive projection, in which participants made sense of imagined others in photographs by projecting their own concerns onto them. McAvoy (2009) argues that this is evidence of a personal order of patterns of communication that are repeated across the talk of individual women in her study. However, for the women in my research, discursive projection onto exemplars was identifiable in much more general and rhetorical ways, as a technique of language; a 'them not me' worked up in the talk. This thesis, then, provides a useful example of an additional way in which discursive projection can function.

The contribution of the third discourse, *the good mother like any other*, relates to the ways in which motherhood is constructed in Irish society. The good mother was like any other because being a good mother could be taken up regardless of whether or not a woman was welfare dependant, without work or education, or was potentially sexually stigmatised. Discourses relating to the *good mother like any other* were taken up in ways which were often overwhelming in their intensity. It was taken up in its entirety as a badge of honour, but more importantly as a route to respectability. Mothers were constructed in this discourse, as women who met all of their children's needs and enjoyed it. These constructions made available a position that might potentially be more straightforwardly available to any woman with children. The women were able to mobilise the sacrifice and devotion that is attributed to mothers, without having to be employed or partnered or even being previously chaste. However, in doing so, they drew on discourses which are associated with enormous burdens on women. As was discussed in Chapter 3, discourses relating to attachment, attachment parenting, and New Momism can make substantial demands on women; these demands are mostly gendered. It has been argued that these kinds of idealised motherhoods are only possible for a small number of middle class women

who have the financial support of a husband or male partner (O'Reilly, 2010). In addition, it has been argued that mothers subject themselves to self-surveillance through guilt (Henderson et al., 2010) in order to accomplish motherhood ideals. At points, the women did argue that family members had become so dependent on them that it was a cause for concern. An overarching responsibility for everything that went on in the family was argued.

On the other hand, motherhood has also been constructed by some feminists as a route to empowerment. Liss and Erchull (2012) found that some feminists say that they use attachment style parenting practices but imagine that this makes them different from other feminists. This thesis adds to this argument an analysis of the ways in which motherhood was used by women, who were often welfare dependent, as a route to respectability, despite the complexities that arose in the multitude of pressures that this entailed. The power that is attributed to maternal identities may not have the same social influence as the power that is attributed to middle class white men, for example. However, within the limited positions of power available to these women at this time, *the good mother like any other* seems to have provided identities that were used to claim a status that was available.

9.1.2 How were versions of family worked up in the interviews?

As well as contributions in relation to single mother identities, this thesis has also provided an analysis of the ways in which family was constructed in the talk of the women. Single motherhood was positioned as a matter for the entire family of the woman who was pregnant and families were constructed as supportive. It is worth noting, and I will pick up this point further in section 9.2 of this chapter, that the families who agreed to take part in this study may have constructed versions of “doing family” in ways that were substantially different to families who did not participate. By talking to groups of women in families, I

excluded women who were not on speaking terms with their families, for instance. The study still, however, yielded interesting results in relation to how families in this situation “did family”.

The analysis has contributed an understanding of the ways in which the impact of ‘gaze’, which was discussed in Chapter 2 can be understood as a matter, not just for the individual woman, but for the family as a whole. Unsanctioned pregnancy was constructed as a disappointment for the father of the pregnant woman and a potential indication of poor parenting on the part of both parents. The ‘shame’ of an unsanctioned out of wedlock pregnancy is constructed as shame for the entire family. The narratives of the women told of secrecy, having to hide their pregnancies; or invisibility, having to remove themselves from potential scrutiny. The metaphor of Bentham’s Panopticon used by Foucault (1977) to describe self-management because of fear of scrutiny, is thus relevant to whole family groups. Surveillance is not only directed at the individual but at the entire family, positioning the family as responsible for unsanctioned pregnancy. Concern for family reputation was an important aspect of the women’s narratives. The family unit was narrated as producing and reproducing family roles and relationships over time and managing trouble as a family affair. However, an important contribution of this part of the research is that it demonstrates that, although families are constructed as negotiated in moment to moment talk, they nevertheless manage and maintain family identities that they work up collectively on an ongoing basis.

That gender roles are maintained and sustained by talk in families is evident from the analysis of the interviews. The roles of men constructed in the talk of the women, as fathers of single mothers, and as fathers of their children was presented in Chapter 7. The analysis shows that men as fathers were constructed in variable and conflicting ways. Narratives

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about men who were forced to marry, conflict with narratives in which they were able to refuse. Indeed, men were often constructed as having a choice about whether or not to accept a pregnancy or to maintain a relationship with their child. Narratives of authority and distance by fathers were at odds with narratives of kindness and caring. However, it is in relation to the role of young single fathers that this thesis raises particular questions. The women in the study constructed their children's non-resident fathers as necessary for the wellbeing of children. However, they also spoke of managing and facilitating this relationship, often with reluctant or disengaged fathers. As was noted in Chapter 5, when I discussed recruitment, men were beyond the scope of this particular research project. Single fathers appear in the talk of the women as a resource - they are duty bound to provide for their children, but needed for very little else. Given the history of illegitimacy in Ireland, as well as the rise of men's rights organisations, discussed in Chapter 4, critical discursive psychological research into how these single father identities are constructed has been identified by this thesis as an important route for further investigation.

This research adds to existing research within a set of approaches that Thompson and McLeod (2009) have termed a 'turn to time'. The use of intergenerational methods made it possible to analyse how women across generations in a family constructed versions of social values and how they apply them. For Bjerrum Nielsen and Rudberg (2000), in their study of family life stories across generations of Norwegian women, there were generational differences in the ways in which women talked about family and relationships. What this thesis provides is an analysis that shows the ways in which families collaborate to produce shared values. Yes, the women who have experienced different social values to those that currently apply gave accounts of what it used to be like, for example, in relation to marriage. However, the family cohere around shared understandings that

marriage is no longer necessary or that Ireland is now progressive. What these examples illustrate is the ways in which families managed social change and collaborated to take up positions that evaluate that change together in families. The families reached consensus on these matters, whilst at the same time acknowledging that values were different in the past. This provides a picture of generational talk that was not static but one that was being worked and reworked in line with available discourses.

9.1.3 How did families collaborate?

The final empirical chapter of the thesis presented an analysis of ways in which family members talked about managing behaviours of other family members in interactions. It identifies some of the strategies that the women discussed for managing delicate subjects and ensuring that there were no additional unsanctioned pregnancies. The chapter also analysed some of the ways in which talk was managed in the moment to moment interactions of the interviews. This study has added to theorisation by Billig (2006) in presenting another way in which discursive repression can be theorised. For Billig (2006), discursive repression involves not saying things that are rude or inappropriate. As Billig puts it:

Language is repressive as well as expressive. In learning to speak appropriately or politely, the child learns what is inappropriate or rude. The pleasures of rudeness, then, are created as objects of desire. In order for social life to be routinely enacted, the temptations of rudeness must be habitually repressed (p22).

My findings add an additional way in which discursive repression can be identified in talk: repression by omission of certain words or by indirect communication. This kind of repression is related to work which has identified that 'delicate' subjects are managed, following rules of hesitancy (Silverman, 1999) and 'expressive caution' (Weijts et al., 1993).

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I have added that 'delicacy' is also managed by the omission of certain words and phrases in delivery of news, which, presumably, will have affective consequences for the hearer. As Billig (2006) has argued, a limitation of classical conversation analysis is that it focuses only on what is said, without reference to wider social discourses. In the instance of the omission of words in my analysis here, it is clear that these words are likely to be delicate *only* in certain circumstance. When the women told narratives about breaking pregnancy news, if the pregnancy was a sanctioned pregnancy, the news was transmitted in a straightforward way which did not omit words. However, if the pregnancy was unsanctioned, the news was communicated obliquely and by implication. It is clear from Billig's notion of rudeness referred to above, that the discursive repression he talks about is not related to the unconscious but rather to the use of the rules of interaction; rules that might be breeched if rudeness was required. Similarly, discursive repression for reasons of delicacy can be seen to be breached in order to accomplish particular outcomes. In Chapter 8, I presented the example of a narrative in which a woman wanted to provoke a reaction from her mother who was described as 'a very dominant woman'. In this instance, she actively constructed the conversation by not repressing words in line with delicacy. In her story, she provoked her mother in order to persuade her to accept the pregnancy of her granddaughter. The contribution of this thesis in relation to discursive repression is that discursive repression is also an accomplishment of discursive delicacy, but also that understanding this discursive repression is dependent on contextual knowledge that is available to speakers even though they don't explicitly mention it.

As I discussed in Chapter 2, critical discursive psychology has been critiqued because it is claimed that it reduces all emotion to talk *of* emotion. However, recent theorisation on the topic, in particular, McAvoy (2015), following Wetherell (2012), has called for a

dissolution of the dualism between language and affect and an attention to the ways in which the two are intimately intertwined in everyday talk and interaction. The data in this thesis provides a rich source of examples of talk which is infused with affective content that is present in family narratives related to the management of trouble. Of particular interest in this thesis, were the stories that were told about sanctions applied to women within the family. The management of affect was a central part of the stories that the women told. Talk of pregnancy news or love for family members would be meaningless without the ways in which affect plays out. When a young woman tells her narrative of not wanting to embarrass her parents by being seen in public, the story is poignant. It is about shame for the family but also about the consequences of exclusion and invisibility. This is not a separate part of the talk but one which is intimately connected to the meanings of the talk. Similarly, in talk of sanctions applied by the families, the women mostly took up subject positions, in which they either deserved or at least understood that sanctions must be applied in order to prevent future transgressions. These stories were about emotions: the women were made to 'feel bad' as a deterrent to future unsanctioned pregnancies. This study, then, provides examples of talk, in which affect and talk are intimately entwined in the meaning that is constructed. As was discussed in Chapter 2, Wetherell (2012) argues that Bourdieu's concept of habitus shows the ways that emotion and affect act as conservative forces by reinforcing the power of past practice. In this context talk of affect works as an explanation for the ways in which family roles and relationships are managed. Further findings on the management of narrative in families has been added by this research to the narrative work that was discussed in Chapter 4 (McLean and Breen, 2009: Fivush, Bohanek and Duke, 2008; Wang and Leichtman, 2000). These studies show that families use narrative to maintain families by sharing family values in the talk that they

used. In the sections of analysis presented in Chapter 8, the families worked collaboratively to present a version of the kinds of family that they are. They worked around the development of the narrative, with family members joining in, finishing each other's sentences, continuing the conversation when delicate omissions created pauses, and working together to produce versions of respectable families. These were families who argued that they did not talk about or watch sex on the television, or who would not go into pubs or take their children into pubs. In addition, family collaborations were presented as a site of family persuasion. As I discussed in Chapter 3, critical discursive psychology argues that versions of events and people are worked up flexibly within interactions. However, as Taylor and Littleton (2006) argue, the talk that is used is part of a pool of personal resources which are deployed in retellings and shared by family members. Taylor and Littleton (2006) claim that individuals strive to present narratives of continuity about themselves. These examples show that this happened in family circumstances too. Families worked collaboratively in the research interviews, to maintain and sustain the family identity as a collective. They did this in their accounting by providing support and keeping the family member close. Their narratives told of the maintenance of relationships through the use of discursive delicacy and repression. They also told of applying sanctions to women who had transgressed and damaged the family name, doing so in the joint interactions of the stories that they told about the kinds of family that they are.

9.1.4 Contribution of the data and data collection method

In addition to the knowledge and theory that this thesis has contributed, it has also contributed resources of data. This research was based on interviews with seven families of Irish women across three generations. The interviews provide a rich source of data for examining the discursive resources that were mobilised, the meanings that were deployed,

and how these meanings are accomplished. The interviews are important in an Irish context because they were carried out at a time following a period of social and economic change with intergenerational groups of women who had lived through a range of different life circumstances.

Another contribution to knowledge that this research has provided was the method of interview that I used. As I discussed in Chapter 4, I used Wengraf's (2001) two part interview structure, for the family interviews. I found that having a break in the middle of the interview provided an interesting and useful way of managing interviews. In the first instance, I was keen to put the women at ease and allow them to talk freely. However, I also anticipated that they would say things that I wanted to ask more about. Breaking the interview into two halves meant that I was able to allow the conversations to proceed in the directions that the women took them, following each prompt question. I was then able to follow up on any points of interest to me in the second half of the family interview.

The break in the middle of the interviews allowed for the women to marshal further discursive resources. In addition, it also helped with a common problem that afflicts interviewers. Quite frequently, interview participants continue to generate interesting talk after the interview has concluded and the recording device had been switched off. In most of the breaks between the interviews, the women had some additional discussion about the topics of the interview. However, because there was a second part of the interview, I was able to follow up on these discussions and raise any issues that had been talked about in the break.

9.2 Reflecting on knowledge construction

In this section, I will reflect on the ways in which this research was conducted and the outcomes of some of the methodological decisions, outlined in Chapter 5. One of the central arguments of research from a social constructionist perspective, is that methodologies and methods construct research. Lazard and McAvoy (2017) argue that it is the process of the research construction that is important to reflexive accounts of research. Attempting to demonstrate some kind of objectivity or lack of bias is not the aim, since all knowledge is constructed in situated circumstances. The purpose of reflexivity, they argue, is:

[T]o make visible specific personal, social, theoretical and/or political influences that shape the research so that claims made and conclusions drawn can be understood and evaluated in context. Because of this, reflexivity is central to establishing rigour in qualitative and mixed method work (p3).

It is these principles on which this reflexive account is based. As a researcher, I am situated in a particular time and set of circumstances related to my own personal biography. My life circumstances, having lived in Ireland for most of my adult life, and having had a child whilst unmarried in the 1980s in Ireland, were important, not just in relation to my choice of topic, but also to the ways in which I managed the research process and, indeed, to the ways in which the data were analysed and theorised.

Decisions about the design of the interviews and recruitment were made in the context of the meanings that I attached to the topic of single motherhood at the outset. I treated the topic as a sensitive topic because it was a sensitive topic for me. In working up a version of what I used to think, I am very aware that Gergen (1998) argues that memories of psychological states are discursive artefacts that support narratives of life stories. As he

puts it: 'We have no means of identifying a particular psychological state associated with or responsible for producing various actions which we publicly index as "memory"' (p.2). For this reason, the account that I give of the process and the choices that I make, is in itself a construction based on my selection of various parts of my accounting for the process of this research. However, it is a construction (and partial reconstruction) that emerges from my own reflexive stance throughout the research and the diary notes that I kept during the process.

There were some aspects of the interview process that I did not consider explicitly when designing the study or applying for ethical approval. Chapter 9 – pages 251 -252 Braybrook et al (2017) identify some potential ethical issues in relation to their own study which involved interviews with couples about health behaviours. Their concerns can be summarised as: coercion of reluctant participants by other participants; the potential that conflict might arise as a result of the interview; and the possibility that individual interviews might be regarded as a way of checking and comparing responses in the interview that included the partner. In relation to coercion of participants; because my interview schedule was so time consuming and involved coordinating the attendance of each woman in one location for most of a day, it was quite easy for potential participants to make themselves unavailable for the interview without explicitly refusing to participate. I did not have any instance of turning up for an interview and finding one or more of the family members had not arrived. On two occasions members of families who had agreed to take part, contacted me ahead of time to say that one family member found the topic too sensitive to discuss. It is therefore possible that in this study the very sensitive nature of the topic and the complex arrangements for setting up the interviews, meant that potentially reluctant participants were able to refuse to participate. In addition the group

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discussions did not become a context in which grievances were raised (though this might potentially have happened). Rather the narratives often had the rehearsed quality (Taylor and Littleton, 2006) of stories that had been told before. It is entirely possible that the kinds of family who were prepared to talk part in a study of this kind had a stake in working up a particular version of family as a functioning unit. In the event, interviewing the women together did not appear to cause any apparent conflict between family members. Furthermore the follow up individual interview did not appear to be taken up as a context in which I was checking stories. Rather the women utilised it as an opportunity to supplement and extend issues that were raised in the group interview.

In relation to my own location within the research, I identify as a feminist, though as Macleod, Marecek, and Capdevila (2014) note, definitions of feminism are highly contextual and situated. Furthermore, outside of academia, there is a persistent representation of feminism and feminists that I do not recognise as relevant to my understanding of feminism (see Edley and Wetherell, 2001, for an interesting analysis of how feminists and feminism have been constructed in talk). My own feminism is related to what I have perceived as injustice for myself, and other women. In an Irish context, the particular ways in which the social sexual and economic regulation of women has been managed, maintained, and reproduced meant that any investigation of single mother identities that I undertook would be guided by this underlying orientation to issues affecting women.

By recruiting women in family groups, I immediately excluded women who were isolated and unsupported. My choices of recruitment also reflected my interest in the intergenerational aspect of single motherhood because of the recent history of the topic in Ireland. My decision to avoid recruiting from organisations working with single mothers in

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a professional care capacity, whom I could have accessed through my work as a lecturer, was related to the kind of research that I wanted to do. I was cautious about problematizing (or re-problematizing) women who I inferred were already positioned as in need of the services of a social care organisation. In addition, I wanted to avoid the status of ‘expert investigator’ and instead presented myself as someone who shared a similar experience to the women. I, therefore, included information about my own experience of single motherhood in recruitment materials. This orientation of my own experience to that of my participants was my attempt to open up a space in which they were not being criticised or diagnosed, but in which they were sharing an experience with someone who understood and would not be approaching them in a judgemental or critical way.

McAvoy (2009) argues, in relation to her research about women’s mid-life accounts of success and failure, that although she and her participants shared similar life circumstances, their agenda in relation to the topic was different from her own. She describes herself as being ‘both a subject *inside* my subject; and simultaneously *outside* of my subjects’ (p. 12, emphasis in original). My agenda was also different from that of my participants. For me, the production of a Doctoral thesis was a developmental goal. I wanted to engage in a process that would improve my skills and knowledge as an academic. In addition, it was important for my teaching job in Higher Education.

However, I shared with the women something that I had not anticipated (or perhaps noticed about myself); a desire to distance myself from identities relating to single mother. As the research progressed, and I became more immersed in the topic of single motherhood in Ireland, my relation to the subject changed. I took up the subject position of single mother as part of my own ‘heroic’ narrative, to use Gergen’s (1998) term. This meant that when I identified the production of respectability in the talk of the women and

when I found that they too were working to avoid the negative stereotypes of single motherhood, it was both surprising and not surprising all at once. It also meant that I was extremely grateful that my participants were prepared to participate in the interviews at all. I believe that, had I seen a request for participation in a study of this kind prior to conducting this research, I would not have volunteered to take part. I would not have wanted to identify myself as a single mother in this way. This in turn meant that my style of interviewing did not follow the interventionist and challenging approach to interviews that Potter and Wetherell (1995) suggest allows for a greater range of talk to be revealed. I worked from the assumption that the women were already subject to challenge in the social context within which they live from the historical and (possibly) imagined talk that is part of Irish society. My analysis of the data also is inevitably my own. Another researcher may well have identified, categorised, and interpreted the interviews in other ways and drawn attention to different aspects of the ways in which family and interactions were managed. It would certainly be very interesting to see how a different analysis of the data might construct findings. In addition, I chose to follow some lines of analysis and exclude others from the thesis. During the analysis, I found in my diary notes an account of a family of women who had talked about their relation to the Catholic Church and their relation to Catholicism. I noted that this family constructed nuanced and interesting accounts of their relation to Catholicism and to being a Catholic or being uninterested in or in opposition to the Catholic Church. Had I asked questions about this topic in all of the interviews, this may well have yielded interesting insights which would have been relevant to the thesis. Unfortunately, data from one family was not sufficient to warrant claims for this section of the interviews. It would certainly be worthwhile to include questions of this kind in any further research on this topic. The analysis that I did carry out on the data that I collected

was, however, done in a rigorous and systematic way, as I could manage, and I was mindful that I needed to be able to warrant my claims for the data.

9.3 Conclusions

As I said in my reflection, the production of this thesis has had an important impact on my own relation to the topic of single motherhood and my own relation to single mother identities. This thesis also provides a way of examining the ways in which women negotiate the trouble that arises from single mother identities. In doing so, it provides a resource that opens up the potential for resistance to the discourses that position single mothers as problematic. By identifying the complexities of negotiating the often conflicting, often burdensome, discourses that are at play in the lives of the women, I hope to open up a space in which they can be challenged.

The exploration of single mother identities across generations of Irish women has yielded some interesting insights. It has found that despite the protestations of change and acceptance, in many circumstances, single motherhood remains a troubled identity. In this context, women and their families negotiate respectability using complex strategies that negotiate a range of objectivising and dividing practices. In addition, families collaborate to ensure that the family identities are maintained and sustained when they talk together. The topic of single motherhood in Ireland is hugely consequential for the freedoms and constraints that women negotiate. This thesis is important for understanding how Irish women live and how they understand and are allowed to understand themselves. Discourses of progress and change must be negotiated alongside discourses of chastity and sexual morality. Families must manage family identities and the identities of family members. These negotiations happen alongside narratives of change, as well as, at the same time, older narratives of sexual morality. It is hoped that this thesis will open up a

space for contestation of at least some of the discourses that constrain and oppress women in Irish society.

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Appendices

Appendix A – The Statue of the Virgin at Granard

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Appendix A – The Statue of the Virgin at Granard

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The Statue of the Virgin at Granard
It can be bitter here at times like this,
November wind sweeping across the border.
Its seeds of ice would cut you to the quick.
The whole town tucked up safe and dreaming,
Even wild things gone to earth, and I
Stuck up here in this grotto, without as much as
Star or planet to ease my vigil.

The howling won't let up. Trees cavort in agony as
if they would be free and take off – ghost voyagers
On the wind that carries intimations
Of garrison towns, walled cities, ghetto lanes
Where men hunt each other and invoke
The various names of God as blessing
On their death tactics, their night manoeuvres.
Closer to home the wind sails
Over dying lakes. I hear fish drowning.
I taste the stagnant water mingled
With turf smoke from outlying farms.

They call me Mary – Blessed, Holy, Virgin.
They fit me to a myth of a man crucified:
The scourging and the falling, and the falling again,
The thorny crown, the hammer blow of iron
Into wrist and ankle, the sacred bleeding heart.
They name me Mother of all this grief

Though mated to no mortal man.
They kneel before me and their prayers
Fly up like sparks from a bonfire
That blaze a moment, then wink out.

It can be lovely here at times. Springtime,
Early summer. Girls in Communion frocks
Pale rivals to the riot in the hedgerows
Of cow parsley and haw blossom, the perfume
From every rushy acre that's left for hay
When the light swings longer with the sun's push
north.

Or the grace of a midsummer wedding
When the earth herself calls out for coupling
And I would break loose of my stony robes,
Pure blue, pure white, as if they had robbed
A child's sky for their colour. My being
Cries out to be incarnate, incarnate,
Maculate and tousled in a honeyed bed.
Even an autumn burial can work its own
pageantry.

The hedges heavy with the burden of fruiting
Crab, sloe, berry, hip; clouds scud east,
Pear scented, windfalls secret in long
Orchard grasses, and some old soul is lowered
To his kin. Death is just another harvest
Scripted to the season's play.
But on this All Soul's Night there is
No respite from the keening of the wind.
I would not be amazed if every corpse came risen
From the graveyard to join in exaltation with the
gale,
A cacophony of bone imploring sky for judgement
And release from being the conscience of the
town.

On a night like this I remember the child
Who came with fifteen summers to her name,
And she lay down alone at my feet

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Without midwife or doctor or friend to hold her
hand

And she pushed her secret out into the night,

Far from the town tucked up in little scandals,

Bargains struck, words broken, prayers, promises,

And though she cried out to me in extremis

I did not move,

I didn't lift a finger to help her,

I didn't intercede with heaven,

Nor whisper the charmed word in God's ear.

On a night like this, I number the days to the
solstice

And the turn back to the

Light.

O sun,

Centre of our foolish dance,

Burning heart of stone,

Molten mother of us all,

Hear me and have pity.

Appendix B – Developmental psychology books from the library

- Atkinson, R., Atkinson, R., Smith, E., and Bem, D.** (1990). *Introduction to Psychology*. USA: Harcourt Brace Hvoanovich.
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Appendix C – Ethical Approval



From Dr Duncan Banks
Chair, The Open University Human Research Ethics Committee
Email d.banks@open.ac.uk
Extension 59198

To Lisa Scott, Psychology, Social Care (Limerick Institute of Technology)
Subject "How do different generations of Irish Women talk about young single motherhood?"
Ref HREC/2011/#1127/1
Red form
Submitted 23 December 2011
Date 18 January 2012

Memorandum

This memorandum is to confirm that the research protocol for the above-named research project, as submitted for ethics review, **is approved** by the Open University Human Research Ethics Committee. Before you start your studies you will need to consider the following question(s) raised by the reviewers;

1. What protocol will be followed in respect of the recording of the family interview if a family member withdraws and wishes their data to be destroyed? Will you allow data destruction up to the point of data analysis and not after that point? The information sheet should explicitly state that data will be destroyed on request, within a specified time limit. Given that a proportion of the women are likely to have a basic level of education, could certain information be made simpler? By way of example, the phrase, "...there will be no negative consequences", could be re-stated to say, for example, "if you choose to withdraw then you will be happy to withdraw your contributions until [date]".
2. Final approval of your application will not be possible until we receive a record of supervisor endorsement.
3. Are any participants likely to be aged under 18 years? If so, the need to seek consent of a parent should be considered, and a current (i.e. dated not more than 3 yrs prior to the last date of data collection) CRB enhanced disclosure is required. Implied consent, because mother/grandmother are present is insufficient and so attachment C needs to be altered accordingly.
4. What if a single mother does not want to be interviewed as part of a family group but would be willing to be interviewed on an individual basis?
5. From the text of the application the interviews are semi structured – is this true? How would you handle the situation if, for example, during an individual interview, you were informed that the pregnancy/motherhood came about owing to a rape? How will this be exacerbated where the mother is still a minor?
6. On attachment D, the Consent Form, there is a list of yes/no questions. What will you do in the event that even one of the first four questions elicits a "No" response?

Please make sure that any question(s) relating to your application and approval are sent to Research-REC-Review@open.ac.uk quoting the HREC reference number. We will endeavour to respond as quickly as possible so that your research is not delayed in any way.

Appendix D - Recruitment materials

Participants needed for psychology research about young single motherhood in families

I am a psychology lecturer and PhD student and am looking for families of Irish women who would like to be interviewed for a project concerning the ways in which Irish women talk about young single motherhood.

I need families which comprise:

- An Irish mother, daughter, granddaughter (three generations of a family)
- All must be over sixteen
- Any one of the women should have been at some point in her life pregnant, unmarried and under the age of twenty (regardless of what happened after that)

I will interview each family together and then afterwards do an individual interview with each of the women.

If you and your family would like to participate in my research, I will be happy to travel to wherever you are (and bring cake!).

Please contact me on lisa.scott@lit.ie or on 086 0802659. I can then discuss the project with you and send more details of the study.

Best wishes,

Lisa Scott, Psychology Lecturer, Limerick Institute of Technology

Appendix E – Information sheet

INFORMATION SHEET

How do Irish women talk about young single motherhood?

Thank you for your interest in taking part in research for my PhD with the Open University. This form gives a brief description of the study and your rights if you choose to participate.

The aim of the research is to find out about how Irish women of different generations talk about young single motherhood. I want to talk to family groups of women in which at least one of the women (daughter, mother, grandmother) became pregnant whilst unmarried and under the age of 20. You may ask questions at any time, however, time will be set aside both before and after each interview to address any extra questions you may have about the research. My interest in this area of research is partly because I had a child when I was young and unmarried, and I would like to see what other women and their families have to say about this topic.

You will be interviewed as a family group, following which each woman will be interviewed individually. The discussions will be audio recorded, transcribed and analysed to find out the kinds of things that Irish women say about young single motherhood. If you would like to see and approve the typed up transcripts before analysis, let me know and I will send them to you.

You are not obliged to take part in this research. If you change your mind at any stage, including after the interview, you are free to withdraw and there will be no negative consequences. You are guaranteed confidentiality in this research and any names or places that might be used to identify you will be changed. I expect that the results will contribute to conference papers and publications based on my PhD research.

Having read this, if you would still like to take part in the research, I will take your names and contact details and contact you to arrange a time to suit.

Thanks a million, and I hope you will take part.

Lisa Scott
Open University PhD student / Psychology lecturer Limerick Institute of Technology
Moylish,
Limerick
Email Lisa.scott@lit.ie or L.scott@open.ac.uk
Tel 061 208208 extension 488

If you need to talk to either of my supervisors at the Open University, they are:

Dr Rose Capdevila
Psychology, Faculty of Social Science
The Open University

Dr Jean McAvoy
Psychology, Faculty of Social Science
The Open University

Tel 01 6785399 and ask to be put through to Walton Hall in the UK.

Appendix F – Consent forms

CONSENT FORM

How do Irish women talk about young single motherhood?

Please do not sign the consent form until you have read the information sheet and you have been given satisfactory answers to any questions that you may have about the research. Please answer the following questions before signing the form:

Have you read the information sheet?	YES/NO
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions about the research?	YES/NO
Have you received satisfactory answers to your questions?	YES/NO
Have you received enough information about the study?	YES/NO
Do you agree to take part in the study?	YES/NO
Would you like to receive a transcript of the interview?	YES/NO

Participant

Signed _____ Date: _____

Printed Name _____

Researcher

Signed _____ Date: _____

Printed Name _____

Lisa Scott
Open University PhD student / Psychology lecturer Limerick Institute of Technology
Moylish,
Limerick
Email Lisa.scott@llit.ie or l.scott@open.ac.uk

Tel 061 208208 extension 488

Appendix G – Interview schedule for family interviews

Interview Questions

Family discussions

What does the term 'single mother' mean to you?

In your experience, what do you think is expected of women in terms of their sexuality?

What, in your experience, is expected of mothers?

Have there been changes in the lives of Irish women?

Have there been changes in the ways in which single mothers live their lives?

How do you see the future for Irish women?

Is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix H – Schedule for individual interviews

Individual interviews

Tell me your experiences of [people] getting pregnant when [they aren't] you weren't married.

Can you tell me about when you first became a mother (what it was like for your mother)?

What does being a mother mean to you?

How do you see your future?

Is there anything you would like to add?

Appendix I – Terms used in thesis

Affect	Affect and emotion are used differently in different contexts by different psychologists. In this thesis I follow Wetherell (2012) in using affect to describe the emotional experiences that are constructed in talk.
Conversation analysis	In general takes a fine grained approach to talk and texts and maintains a focus on the interaction that goes on within the text rather than being linked to cultural and historical context e.g.(Schegloff, 1997)
Dilemma of stake	an assumed vested interest by the speaker is managed by acknowledgement of that interest (Edwards and Potter, 2005)
Discourse	Because this entire thesis is about discourse, the ways in which the term is used are broad. The theorisation is described in Chapter 2. As a general rule discourse is used in this thesis as a system of meaning that is constructed in social interaction. It can encompass social practices as well as words.
Discursive repression	I follow Billig (2006) in arguing that silence is a form of communication in which rules of interaction mean that certain words and phrases are not used - particularly in 'delicate' talk
Discursive projection	Building on the work of McAvoy (2009) I argue that in my data participants used discursive projection in a generalised way by projecting negative stereotypes onto an imagined exemplar
Dividing practices	Term used by Foucault (1986) for the ways in which subjectification occurs as a result of being categorised
Emotion	Following Wetherell (2012) the description of the psychological state (as distinct from affect, which I am using as the description of the experience). There is often overlap
Emotional regime	Wetherell (2013) in emotions are contextual and mutual and only certain ones can be talked about in certain contexts
Epistemology	Ways of obtaining knowledge about something. Closely related to ontological position. In the case of this thesis, the epistemological stance is that the best way of obtaining knowledge about subjectivities is by examining how meanings are constructed in language
Family	This is a contested term which can be used in many ways and contexts. For the purposes of this research families are the related women across three generations who took part in the research and the people they identify as family members in their talk
Father	The term 'putative' father is used in much of the scholarly work relating to single motherhood. Putativity relates to the notion that the man in question is commonly assumed to be the father and thus by implication may not be. I will not be using this term because it is rarely utilised in the context of other family relationships or indeed in the context of married fathers, and has connotations of cuckoldry.
Feminist	There is a wide range of scholarly thought on what feminism is or might be. For the purpose of this thesis, I am taking feminism as an approach which examines systematic ways in which women are positioned because of their gender.
Gaze	In the work of Foucault (1977) subjectivities are managed by the self because of imagined gaze

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Identities	Identities are in this thesis the result of social construction and are worked up in talk
Ideological dilemma	Billig (1987) notes that, because of the contextual nature of talk, people often take up positions that are contradictory. When this occurs he calls it an ideological dilemma
Ideology	For Billig (1987), talk is rhetorical and is thus build from the ideologies that appear in talk
interpretative repertoire	Relatively internally consistent, bounded language units' that are based on shared meanings within specific social contexts. They are used flexibly to construct actions in interaction and talk (Potter and Wetherell, 1987).
Language	Not a neutral medium for communication but rather the building blocks of spoken discourse
Management of the self	One of Foucault's (1982) forms of subjectification in which humans make subjects of themselves through taking up available identities
Modes of Inquiry	Foucault (1982) identified three ways in which subjectivities are brought into being: objectivising, dividing practices and management of the self
Moral panic	When certain groups are positioned as a threat to social order (Cohen, 1972)
Mother	Mothers can be defined in a variety of ways. In this research they are defined narrowly as biological mothers who have given birth to children and kept them
Mutuality	The observation that talk and therefore identities are managed jointly and therefore can result in variable outcomes (Shotter, 1993)
Neoliberal	Neoliberal ideology constructs individuals who are first and foremost economic agents
objectification	One of Foucault's (1982) forms of subjectification in which individuals are categorised as particular kinds of object
Ontology	Theory of what can be known - a social constructionist perspective argues that the social world is best understood by an examination of the meanings in a particular time and place
Panopticon	A metaphor utilised by Foucault to describe the gaze or imagined gaze, which leads to management of behaviour in ways which fit social norms
Personal Orders	Wetherell's (2003) concept of personal orders, the links between habit and affect in talk,
Positivist	Founded on the principles of natural science which see the world as available for objective analysis
Problematization	For Foucault when certain subjects are defined as a problem by objectivising or classification
Single mother	Single motherhood is defined in a range of different ways in this thesis. For the purposes of participation in the study single mothers need to have been unmarried at the time of giving birth to a child. However participants in this study (and in other places) used this term flexibly to mean someone who has no partner (regardless of marital status) as well as more negative stereotypes based on welfare dependence and unwillingness to work.
Situated knowledges	Knowledge is constructed in a specific time and place (Haraway, 1988)
Social Constructionism	An approach to understanding that assumes that knowledge pre-exists the individual (Gergen, 1999)

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Subject positions	Harré (2012) describes subject positions as potentially short-term disputable rights and duties conferred on individuals, which allow them to perform particular kinds of meaningful action.
Surveillance	Associated with the gaze or panopticon - imagined surveillance is one of Foucault's techniques for management of the self
Subjectification	In Foucault's work the process by which one is made a subject
Teenage mother	Was mostly avoided due to negative connotations but was used when talking about particular work which used this term or specific references which used it
Unmarried mother	Was used as a term to refer to women who had children outside of marriage and came to have negative connotations (Houghton, 2004)
Young single mother	For the purpose of this research, a woman who at some point in her life has been pregnant, unmarried and under the age of 20